Stop headaches with two minutes of daily strength training

Two minutes of daily resistance band exercises is enough to reduce the neck and shoulder pains that can cause headaches.

A long work day in front of the computer can leave you with sore shoulders, a stiff neck and a headache.

Now a Danish study has found that these pains can be significantly reduced by exercising two minutes a day with resistance bands.

The study was carried out by researchers at the National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE), and the results are published in the Scandinavian Journal of Work Environment and Health (see link below).

“Our participants experienced reduced pains in their necks and shoulders by exercising with resistance bands, and the effects for those who exercised two minutes a day were roughly the same as for those who did it for twelve minutes a day,” says NRCWE senior researcher Lars L. Andersen, who headed the study.

Almost 200 participants

The study consisted of 174 women and 24 men, all of whom worked at least 30 hours a week in physically inactive jobs. Four out of five suffered from recurring pains in their necks and shoulders, but didn't suffer from other types of pains such as slipped disc and whiplash.

All participants underwent examinations of their necks and shoulders prior to the study and filled in a questionnaire about their pains.

One third were asked to do strength training with resistance bands two minutes a day, five days a week. Another third did the exercises for twelve minutes a day, five days a week, while the remaining third functioned as a control group and did not exercise at all.

The exercises were targeted at the muscles that normally become stressed when sitting in front of a computer.

Fewer neck and shoulder pains

The participants reported significantly fewer pains as a result of their daily exercise.

“On a scale from 0 to 10, neck and shoulder pains fell by an average of 1.9 points with twelve minutes of daily exercise, and 1.4 points with two minutes of daily exercise. So even two minutes a day can make a difference,” says Andersen, adding that the results started to emerge after three to four weeks.
“A general tip is that if you don't feel any improvement after the first month, you're not getting the right 'treatment’”

**Two minutes' exercise increases blood circulation**

When two minutes of exercise can produce such dramatic results, it is because even short stints of exercise can loosen up tense muscles as long as it's done several times a week, he explains.

“Even brief spells of exercise can improve the blood circulation in the muscles, which increases oxidation.”

**Neck and shoulder pains are a widespread problem**

Between 30 and 50 percent of all Danish adults have experienced pains in their neck and shoulder muscles within the past year.

Of those whose work mainly consists of sitting by the computer, more than half have had pains in the past year.

Since these pains can lead to chronic pains in the neck muscles, it is important to treat the symptoms before they develop into chronic pains.

The next step is to find out whether exercise with resistance bands can also benefit people with more physically active jobs, such as builders, butchers and nursing staff.

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**Exercise can heal broken bones** [11] **How acidosis develops during exercise** [12]

[Lars L. Andersen's profile] [13]

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*Office workers experience fewer headaches when they exercise regularly. The exercise, however, does not affect the intensity and the duration of the headaches. (Video: NFA)*

[Ditte Svane-Knudsen] [15]

Dann Vinther

November 6, 2011 - 12:52

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