



Incorporate activity into your daily routine — for example, taking the stairs rather than the lift

How can I stay fit at my desk?

I work full time in an office and now that I can't ride before or after work, I'm worried that my riding fitness is going to suffer. Are there any exercises I can do at my desk to help?

D Mack, Hants

WORKING in an office not only restricts physical exercise, making it difficult to stay fit, it can also have a negative effect on your posture.

"Poor posture can have a massive impact on rider fitness," says advanced level personal trainer Jacqueline Bosworth from Elite Health.

"Sitting at desks [working] on computers tends to pull our shoulders forward, weaken our upper back muscles and can also mean core muscles are switched off — [and] these are essential for a good riding seat."

So, what can be done?

"The best approach is to make sure you get up and move a minimum of every couple of hours," says Jacqueline. "Even if it's just to get a drink, photocopy or file — anything to get

the body moving."

Carys Jackson from ActiveRider, a company that helps riders improve their fitness through workshops and clinics, says: "Research has shown that standing up every 20min and walking round the office will reduce your diabetes risk rate, help you lose weight and improve fitness."

Russell Guire, of Centaur Biomechanics and ActiveRider, suggests: "Try getting up and walking around every time you answer the phone, and take the stairs rather than the lift."

Feet first

"FOOTWEAR should be considered too, as high heels could affect the rider's leg position, with the heels being up as opposed to being down

when riding. Either adjust your footwear or stand on a step with your heel off [the step] and bounce gently up and down to stretch the back of your legs," adds Russell.

Asymmetry is another problem associated with sitting at a desk.

"Riders that repetitively rotate one side to answer the phone or file things away should counteract that with a rotation the opposite way — for every asymmetric rotation there needs to be an opposite rotation to counteract it," advises Russell.

"Try moving things around, so have the mouse on the right and phone on the left, and ensure that when carrying bags, they are loaded symmetrically on your back and not hanging off one shoulder.

ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?

"THERE are alternatives to a chair such as a stability ball or a kneeling chair to get those core muscles working," says Jacqueline Bosworth from Elite Health.

"However, you will need to build up to sitting on these for longer periods of time — start with just short periods and build up slowly to full days."



The Human Tool can help improve posture

Back In Action offers office chairs and alternatives to improve posture and reduce back pain while sitting at a desk.

One alternative is a standing desk, at which you can sit or stand, allowing you to keep moving.

The Human Tool is another widely used product aimed at improving posture. Users sit on the saddle-shaped seat attachment, which enables 360° movement and activates core muscles.

Kneeling chairs also encourage movement and activate core muscles, as well as reducing joint stiffness.



Kneeling chairs will activate core muscles

5 TOP TIPS FOR EXERCISING AT THE OFFICE

1 Every time you make a cup of tea, do a set of 15 squats, and 20 lunges (alternate legs) to strengthen the legs and glutes for riding, as well as raising your heart rate.

2 Go for a run or brisk walk up the stairs or round the office floors, walk to work or park the car a short walk away from the office.

3 While sitting down, slouch for a second, then sit up using your transverse abdominals (deep core), as opposed to your back muscles, lift the shoulders up, back and then relax them down slightly. Now put a dot in your direct line of sight, and every 30min, reset yourself so you are still in line with the dot.

4 When sitting on a chair or Swiss ball, locate your seat bones and put your pelvis in neutral and then think of stacking your ribs on top, stretching up through your abdominals, lifting your chest and balancing your head on top of your shoulders.

Ideally hold the core position while you work and repeat as many times as you can.

5 ActiveRider has short 15min workouts that you can follow from your computer or smartphone, which still leaves plenty of time to grab a bite to eat and unwind during your break.



"Work on co-ordination too — if you are right-handed you could use your left hand to answer the phone."

Ensuring you are set up correctly at your desk and computer is also vital.

"Riders should ensure that they are not slumped in their chair with rounded shoulders — they should engage their core and sit on their seat bones," says Jacqueline.

You can also have a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment carried out to ensure that you have the right chair, desk and lighting.

Russell adds: "Your

arms should be at right angles to the desk, knees 10° lower than hips with your feet supported either on the floor or a foot rest, and the top of any display unit at eye level.

"A properly set-up workstation will ensure you can maintain great posture, keep core muscles working and the head position correct." **H&H**

Useful contacts

- www.theactiverider.com
- www.centaurbiomechanics.co.uk
- www.eliteh.co.uk
- www.backinaction.co.uk

Correction

In our 26 June issue, we incorrectly stated: "Under the Weeds Act 1959 and the Ragwort Control Act 2003 you are obliged to remove or treat ragwort on your own land."

Under the Weeds Act you may be ordered to control ragwort, but there is no legal requirement for a landowner to control the plant without such an order.

The Ragwort Control Act creates a Code of Practice for control, but no automatic legal obligation to control the plant.

Livestock owners are responsible for the welfare of their animals and should satisfy themselves that their stock is not exposed to the risk of ragwort poisoning, and should, with reference to the Code of Practice, remove ragwort plants where necessary.

