

Office workers suffer from pains in the lower and upper back!

1 How do we know that office workers have problems with pains in the lower and upper back?

Backapp AS has conducted a research project supported by the Norwegian Research Council (Skattefunn project). One of the targets was to document status of back pains among office workers.

354 office workers from Norway (KGH Custom Service) from Sweden (Kongsberg Maritime, Ving Thomas Cook Northern Europe Division, Tretton 37) and from Denmark (Kamstrup, Siemens Gamesa, Toyota and OK oil) participated in the study.

The 354 people in the project were 209 women and 145 men. The average age was 42 years. Height and weight were normal.

The participants were sitting on normal office chairs, both with and without armrests. They all had electric sit/stand height adjustable desks.

The office workers answered on a questionnaire created by Force Technology in Denmark, an independent third party. Force Technology also collected the data and reported the results.

2 What did we find?

The office workers were working in a seated position in front of a computer screen an average of 5.4 hours per day. They were working in the standing position an average of 1.2 hours per day.

The office workers were in the beginning of the study asked if they had pains in the lower back or in the upper back during a normal work week. The response was submitted anonymously. It was possible to choose more than one area of pain. Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. How often do you experience pain in either back, shoulders, neck, head, arms or hands during a normal work week? You can choose more than one area of pain.

	Number of office workers	Percent*
Lower back pain or stiffness	175	49,4
Shoulder and neck pain/or stiffness	241	68,1
Arms and/or hand pains	73	20,6
Headaches during or after work	125	35,3
None of the above	31	8,8

*% of 354

175 (49,4%) reported Lower back pain every week
241 (68,1%) reported Shoulder and neck pain
125 (35,3%) reported Headaches during or after work
73 (20,6%) reported Arms and/or hand pains

Only 31 (8,8%) reported No pain in the lower and upper back.

The office workers reported an average of 1.79 pain areas per office worker.

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3 What did we learn from the results?

The results were astonishing. The hidden main disease among office workers are Shoulder and neck pains. As many as 68,1% of the office workers reported Shoulder and neck pains every week. Shoulder and neck pains may cause headache and pains in arms and hands. 49,4% of the office workers reported low back pains. Only 8,8% were pain free.

We are spending more and more time sitting in front of the screen. Our focus is on the screen and our bodies suffer. Passive sitting in front of a screen may result in serious muscle-skeletal problems in the lower and upper back. Passive sitting may also reduce productivity for office workers. Number of sick days can increase.

We need to focus on the whole body. Office workers use mainly head and arms/hands. The rest of the body is passive. The results from this study indicate that office workers may experience positive health effects by introducing more activity at the workstation.