



ERGONOMICS IN THE OFFICE

The goal of this handout is to help you prevent injuries and pain, plus give you information to make your life at work as physically comfortable as possible.

Your Work Station

An efficient work station is one where the most important and frequently performed tasks are closest to hand and eye. You should be able to perform your jobs with a minimum of reaching, twisting, pushing, pulling, and rearranging. You should also be able to maintain properly balanced posture - avoiding fatigue, injuries, and pain.

There are recommended settings for chairs, desks, computer keyboards and screens, and other equipment, plus proper positions for your body to help prevent these injuries. We will attempt to address your basic needs, but modification may be needed. Company and individual consultations can be arranged.

The Evaluation

To evaluate your office space, determine the equipment you use most often. Have that equipment closest to you. For example, if phone use is primary, then the phones must be easy to reach. Are you forced to twist or turn to reach for something you use often? Are you writing or keying in data while on the phone? - a headset will free your hands. If you have multiple tasks, all performed frequently, are they all close by?

Seat back and seat pan settings vary depending on the task - computers require one setting, while handwriting requires another. Lighting should also be evaluated to help prevent eye strain and headaches.

Your Desk - The height is determined by the task to be performed. Generally, the closer the hands and eyes must work together, the higher the desk should be. Once the desk height is determined, your chair, computer, typewriter and other equipment will be adjusted accordingly.

If you rest your arms on your desk often, it is best to have a desk with rounded edges.

Swivels - are a great convenience. When turning, be sure you turn your whole body, IE: shoulders and hips aligned together as much as possible. Avoid extreme twisting and leaning especially if you have to lift heavy objects.

Feet - Your feet should rest flat on the floor. If this does not happen naturally, you should use a foot rest. The foot rest should angle up (up to 15 degrees), be wide enough to comfortably place both feet, and have a non-skid surface, and be stable so that it does not shift about or restrict your ability to get in and out from your desk easily. (A telephone book can work in a pinch, but is not stable).

Wrists - should be in a "neutral" position as level as possible with the forearm - not flexed back or forward. Wrist rests create wrist pressure and problems if used constantly. Check to see if your wrist is in the neutral position. Stretch your arms and wrists to relax them often.

Computers -

Keyboard - Height is, of course, dependant on desk height. Raise or lower your chair &/or desk so your shoulders and arms are fully relaxed. If you find that you must raise your shoulders up to rest your arms on your desk, your settings are wrong and you are creating neck and shoulder problems.

Computer Screen - Set it so the middle of the screen is at chin level or so your head looks straight forward to the screen. Avoid having to tilt the screen. If the screen needs to be tilted, it is probably set too low.

Distance from your eye to screen should be approximately 14-30". Set the distance to permit you to see all the characters readily without having to lean your head back or forward. Is your head in a normal position so that you only have to move your eyes (not your head) to do your work?

If you are copying data from documents, use a document holder that fastens to the side of your computer. Move the keyboard and screen so the copy is directly in your line of vision without having to turn your head. This usually means moving your keyboard or screen over to the side. The objective here is to avoid having your head turned or tilted down for prolonged periods.