

# Health Enews



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## Office Ergonomics

The goal of office ergonomics is to set up your work space so that it fits you and the job you are doing.

### Why is Office Ergonomics Important?

Practicing good ergonomics at work can:

- Decrease injury and illness at work.
- Lower stress and injury caused by awkward positions and repetitive tasks.
- Reduce problems such as headaches and eyestrain.
- Reduce neck and back pain.
- Prevent bursitis and tendon problems that are often linked to repetitive tasks.

By making simple adjustments to your monitor, chair, desk, keyboard, mouse, and lighting, significant improvements can be made to decrease pain and injury.

### Monitor Placement

By adjusting your monitor, you may be able to prevent eye strain, neck pain, and shoulder fatigue.

- Make sure the surface of the viewing screen is clean.
- Adjust brightness and contrast to optimum comfort.
- Position the monitor directly in front of user to avoid excessive twisting of the neck.
- Position the monitor approximately 20-26 inches (arm's length) from user.
- Tilt the top of the monitor back 10-20 degrees.
- Top of the monitor should be at eye level when sitting up at an upright position (bifocal wearers may need to lower the monitor a couple inches).

### Adjusting Your Chair

Sitting is actually hard on the body. Sitting for long periods of time can cause increased pressure on the discs of the spine and create a sluggish return of blood to the heart as it pools in your legs. So what can you do?

- When performing tasks, alternate between sitting and standing.
- Adjust height of backrest to support the natural inward curvature of the lower back. It may be useful to use a rolled towel or lumbar pad to support the lower back. Also, ensure that the backrest angle is set so that your hip and torso angle is at a 90 degree angle.
- Adjust height of chair so that feet rest flat on the floor. Sit upright in your chair with the low back against the backrest and the shoulders touching the backrest. Thighs should be parallel to the floor and knees at the same level as the hips. Back of knees should not come in direct contact with the edge of the seat pan. There should be 2-3 inches between the edge of the seat and the back of the knee.



- Don't use armrests to slouch.
- Adjust height and/or width of armrests so that you rest arms at your sides and relax/drop your shoulders while using the keyboard.
- When armrests are used, elbows and lower arms should rest lightly to prevent circulatory or nerve problems.

### **Desktop Placement**

There are no specific height recommendations for your desktop; however, it is recommended that the height of your desk should be approximately elbow height for light duty desk work. To allow for proper alignment of your arms, your keyboard should be approximately 1-2 inches above your thighs.

### **Keyboard and Mouse Placement**

To prevent the development of an ergonomic problem in the upper extremities:

- Adjust keyboard height so that shoulders can relax and allow arms to rest at sides.
- Keep your keyboard close to avoid excessive extended reaching.
- Keep your forearms parallel to the floor (approximately 90 degree angle at elbow).
- The mouse should be placed adjacent to the keyboard and at the same height as the keyboard.
- Avoid extended and elevated reaching for your keyboard and mouse. Keep wrists in a neutral position.
- Avoid resting your hand on the mouse when you are not using it. Rest your hands in your lap when not entering data.

### **Lighting**

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) suggests that only 18-46 foot candle-illumination level is needed in the typical office environment. To help reduce eye strain and eye fatigue:

- Close drapes/blinds to reduce glare.
- Reduce overhead lighting when possible.
- Use indirect shielded lighting where possible.
- Paint walls a medium or dark color without a reflective finish.
- Use a glare screen to reduce glare.

### **Additional Tips to Prevent Work Injuries**

- Place your work in front of you and sit tall while you work.
- Turn your whole body instead of twisting to face your work.
- Take breaks to stretch or get out of your chair every 20 to 40 minutes.
- Use a footrest to help support your legs and reduce back strain, especially if your feet don't rest comfortably flat on the floor.

