

Ergonomic Tips for Synchronizing Your Work Station & Office Chair

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As we spend more and more time on the computer each day, it is imperative that we take the steps to be sure our work station is set up to prevent musculoskeletal disorders. Ergonomic injuries or musculoskeletal disorders can affect the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, and spinal discs.

Tips to prevent ergonomic injuries & musculoskeletal disorders:

Check your posture.

Sit as close as possible to your desk, with your upper arms in parallel to your spine and your hands rested on the work surface. Then, exam whether your elbows are at a 90-degree angle. If they are not, adjust your office chair higher or lower as necessary. Also, make sure your legs are bent at the knees at a 90 degree angle. Try to maintain this ideal sitting posture as much as possible, and if you find yourself slacking, give yourself a break by getting up and stretching.

Boost your feet in certain situations.

If you have to lift your feet off the ground because of a chair or a desk that is too high and cannot be adjusted, consider using a footstool to prop and rest your feet as opposed to leaving them hanging all day long. Using a footstool will reduce pressure on the feet, which decreases foot pain at the end of the day.

Raise your work surface if needed.

If you are unusually tall and there is more than a finger width between your thigh and chair, consider raising the height of your work surface/desk. Raising your desk will then allow you to raise your chair to a more suitable height that will reduce strain on your back.



Check the depth of your seat.

Seat depth refers to the length between the back edge and front edge of your seat. To check proper seat depth, first sit all the way back in your chair. Check the room between the front edge of your chair and your calves by making a fist and bringing it to the edge of the chair and pushing it on the calf. If you can fit your full fist between the front edge of the chair and your calf, you likely have enough space for circulation. If not, your chair is likely too deep. Moving the chair's backrest forward, inserting a cushion, pillow, or rolled-up towel to support your lower back, or purchasing a new office chair are some possible solutions.

Support your back.

Ideally, your chair should provide back support angling just past 90 degrees or up to 90 degrees, and include cushioning that pushes your back forward when sitting back in the chair. Low back support is essential in preventing slouching and minimizing the load on your back.

The backrest on an ideal ergonomic office chair is typically between 12 to 19 inches wide.

Watch your posture.

Make a conscious effort to press your bottom against the back of the chair, and avoid slumping or slouching, which places extra stress on the lumbar discs and other structures of the lower back.

Watch the height of your screen.

Your eyes should be aimed at the center of your computer screen. Adjust the screen so it is level with your gaze.

Adjust your armrest.

Armrest play an important role in reducing neck and shoulder strain and diminishing the likelihood of slouching forward in your chair. Adjust the armrest to the point where your arms are slightly lifted at the shoulders. Doing so will allow the armrests to support just the elbow and take weight off the shoulders.

Additionally, the United States Department of Labor provides a checklist to create a safe and comfortable workstation at:

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/checklist_evaluation.html