Office Ergonomics

A Guide for Working Smarter and Healthier

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Having a safe, comfortable workspace is crucial for optimizing employee health and performance.

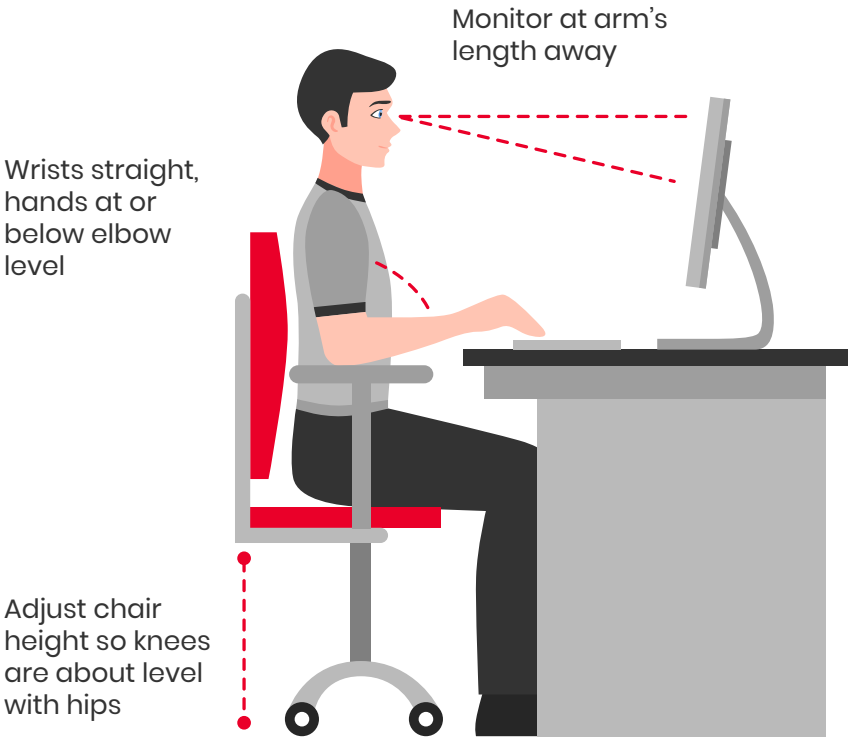
This guide will provide you with ergonomic strategies and methods to use for optimizing your work environment and office materials.



Ergonomics:
The science of interactions between individuals and technology.[i] It is applied for the purpose of making tasks, equipment, and environments more compatible with peoples' needs and abilities. Ergonomics is intended to promote individual health and well-being and prevent cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs).

Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs):
An encompassing term to describe a variety of nervous and musculoskeletal injuries caused by sustained postures, repetitive movements, and/or motions involving pressure or force.[ii] This includes carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and Raynaud's syndrome.[iii]

CTDs are the fastest growing classification of work-related illnesses.[iv] As CTDs are largely preventable, it is critical that the ways we move and the technologies we use support our health as we work.[v] The guide below contains strategies and methods that are proven to prevent CTDs and enhance employee well-being and performance, wherever you may be working.



Materials and Equipment
The materials and equipment within your workspace play critical roles in supporting you as you work. Utilizing them correctly to suit your physique have short and long-term benefits for your personal well-being and professional endeavours.

Office Chair
Key success factors necessary to ensure your strategy will impact both health and performance indicators include:

- Select a chair that you find comfortable and can support your body over long durations of time.[vi]
- Ensure that the chair supports your back and fits your spinal curvature. Additionally, a chair with a headrest can provide added support and prevent neck pain.[vii]
- Armrests can often be beneficial, but largely depend on the type of work you do.[viii] If they do not interfere with your work, opt for a chair with armrests.[ix]
- When possible, choose a chair with the ability to adjust its height and/or armrests.[x] Modify the chair so:

    i) Your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest[xi]
    ii) Your thighs are parallel to the floor[xii]
    iii) Your arms are bent at a 90-degree angle and parallel to the floor when you are working.[xiii] Wrists should be in a neutral position.[xiv]
    iv) Your shoulders are relaxed and have minimal tension[xv]
    v) Your arms rest comfortably on the chair's armrests (when applicable)[xvi]

- If your chair cannot be adjusted to align with your desk, modify your sitting arrangement to suit you needs (e.g. putting a cushion or a rolled-up towel on the seat of your chair or behind your back).[xvii]
- Select a chair with five casters (wheels) if possible, for increased stability.[xviii]
- An effective chair should be able to tilt backwards and forwards when in use, making it easier to change postures throughout your workdays.[xix]





Workstation (Sitting or Standing)

- When working (sitting or standing), your elbows should be bent at a 90-degree angle, parallel to the floor. Your wrists should be in a relaxed, neutral position.[xxi]
- If you choose a standing workstation, stand up straight with your head, neck, torso, and legs in line.[xxii]
- If your work station has a hard edge and is uncomfortable to use, fold a towel or piece of fabric over the edge.[xxiii]
- Have enough space underneath and around your desk to ensure that your legs have room to move around freely. [xxiv]

Computer Monitor/Laptop

- Position your monitor/laptop directly in front of you, approximately one arm's length away. [xxv]
- Adjust the height of your monitor/laptop so the top of its screen is slightly below your eye level.[xxvi] You should be able to view the screen without bending your neck significantly.[xxvii]
  If you are using a laptop and cannot raise it to meet these criteria, place it on a sturdy material to raise it higher to meet your line of sight (e.g. placing your laptop on some books). [xxviii]
- If you have windows in your workspace, position your monitor/laptop to be perpendicular to the window(s) to reduce/eliminate glare.[xxix]
- Adjust the brightness settings on your digital devices to be similar to the brightness of your working area.[xxx]



Keyboard and Mouse

- Place your keyboard and mouse on the same surface adjacent to each other.[xxxi]
- Arrange them to be easy to reach and allow you to keep your arms and wrists relaxed and in a neutral position while using them.[xxxii]

Phones/Mobile Devices

- When having phone conversations while working, opt for a hands-free option when possible instead of holding your phone between your neck and shoulder (e.g. use a wireless headset, choose the speakerphone feature if privacy is not an issue).[xxxiii]
- When using a mobile device, raise it closer to your line of sight instead of lowering your head to prevent pain or soreness from developing ("Text Neck").[xxxiv]

Final Ergonomic Strategies for Well-Being

- Arrange your work and office materials to be within your reach while you are seated.[xxxv] If you are unable to reach something while seated, stand up to do so to avoid excessive stretching or bending motions.[xxxvi]
- If your work involves sitting at a desk, block off 5-10 minutes every hour to stand up and walk around.[xxxvii] According to research, taking consistent standing and/or walking breaks can improve cognitive performance and decrease the chances of developing chronic health conditions, including CTDs.[xxxviii]
- When working on a computer for an extended period, blink your eyes more frequently. This will help to keep your eyes lubricated, which will help to avoid dryness and irritation.[xxxix]
- Throughout your workday, periodically look away from your work and focus on a distance object.[xl] This will give your eyes a chance to relax and reduce the risk of developing eye-strain.[xli]
- When working, face your workstation directly. Avoid working in a position that requires you to turn/raise/lower your head and neck to prevent any pain or soreness from developing.[xlii]
- If you are experiencing any pain or discomfort while you work, seek advice from your physician or professional ergonomist.

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