

Set up your computer monitor correctly for comfortable head and neck postures

The monitor should sit directly in front of you. Constant or frequent head turning to read from a monitor set to one side can lead to neck strain.

If you have 20/20 vision or use single power corrective lenses, the top line on the monitor screen should be at eye level.

If you are wearing bi-focals or tri-focals, the top line on the monitor screen should be about three inches below eye level.

You should be able to read from your monitor screen without bending your head backwards at the neck (high monitor) and without moderate or extreme downwards bending of the head (low monitor).

Refresh your eyes with micro-breaks

When working for long stretches at a computer monitor, once every 30 to 45 minutes, look away from the monitor screen for 30 to 60 seconds and focus on something that is 20 feet away or more. This will help relax the eyes.

Leaning back in your chair can be good for you

Studies have shown that leaning straight back with a 100 to 110 degree angle between the trunk and the thighs results in a significant decrease in pressure in the intervertebral discs of the lumbar spine and helps to relax the back muscles.

Leaning back works best when the backrest is medium to high and has good lumbar support that can be adjusted.

Safe keyboarding

When typing, there should be no upwards or downwards bending of the hands at the wrists and no sideways deviations of the hands at the wrists. When typing, the shoulders should be relaxed with the upper arms hanging down and the elbows should be close to the waist.

Minimize upwards or downwards bending at the wrists by setting the keyboard at the correct height for the operator. To achieve this, set the keyboard such that the home row is either level with the operator's elbow height or no more than two inches higher than the operator's elbow height.

Another way to achieve more neutral hand and wrist postures is to place the keyboard slightly lower than the operator's elbow height, tilting it backwards 10 to 15 degrees. This refers to a negative tilt, whereby the front edge of the keyboard (the edge that is closest to the operator) is higher than the back part of the keyboard.

Use an ergonomic split keyboard to minimize or avoid sideways deviations of the hands at the wrists.

Adjust your computer workstation

The components of your computer system (monitor, CPU, keyboard, mouse) and workstation (work-surfaces, chair etc.) can be adjusted for an optimum functional match for the operator and the work tasks to be accomplished.

Good computer workstation ergonomics essentially means a workstation that is adjusted to you – one in which there is suitable postural support and no unnecessarily strenuous or awkward work postures.

Many of the adjustments can be accomplished quickly by changing the height and reach distances of the equipment to match the height and reach distances of the operator.

A combination of selecting/adjusting the workstation components correctly for the operator and using good body-mechanics can prevent many work related aches and pains, as well as serious musculo-skeletal problems such as severe back pain and tendonitis.

Work Smart-Work Safe: Lifting Tasks

- The load to be lifted should be between your knuckle and shoulder level.
- For maximum biomechanical advantage, the heavier the load, the more it should be within your knuckle to elbow height.
- When holding a load there should be absolutely no twisting at the waist and absolutely no sideways bending at the waist.
- A number of back injuries happen when twisting is combined with bending while carrying a load.
- To change direction or turn while holding a load, first turn one foot in the desired direction followed by the other foot and the whole body, with no twisting at the waist.
- Maintain a firm grip on the load.
- Carry the load close to your center of gravity.
- When picking up a load, allow sufficient space to get close to the load. Never pick up a heavy load with outstretched arms or by bending forward at the waist.
- Pick up and put down the load at a slow speed.
- Test the load before picking it up.
- Put the load down and ask for assistance if it feels too heavy.

Remember that it is smarter to ask for help or use mechanical-assist devices than to rely on good body mechanics alone.

For more information contact:

Pramila Kalaga, MS, CPE
Board Certified Professional Ergonomist
Alegent Health Occupational Medicine Clinic
402-717-1252