

COMPUTER WORKSTATION ERGONOMIC SUGGESTIONS

Environmental Health and Safety



When you are working at a computer workstation, it is important to avoid awkward postures and position your body comfortably. Not only can this improve your overall productivity, it may help you avoid musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). Keep in mind that changing your posture during extended tasks may also help you avoid discomfort and fatigue.

When working at the computer, adapt your surroundings and arrange your computing equipment to promote a comfortable and relaxed body posture. Setting up your workstation to avoid discomfort depends on your unique body size and work environment. However, the following suggestions may help provide you with a more comfortable environment.

TO SUPPORT YOUR BACK, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Use a chair that supports your lower back (see detail 1).
- » Adjust your work surface and chair height to assume a comfortable and natural body posture (see detail 2).



TO PROMOTE PROPER WRIST AND FINGER POSTURES, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Keep your wrists straight while typing and while using a mouse or trackball. Avoid bending your wrists up, down, or to the sides. If your keyboard has legs, extend them if this helps you maintain a comfortable and straight wrist position.
- » Type with your hands and wrists floating above the keyboard, so that you can use your whole arm to reach for distant keys instead of stretching your fingers.

TO MINIMIZE NECK MOVEMENT TRY THE FOLLOWING:

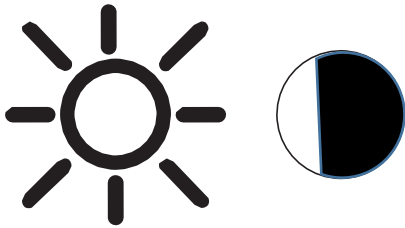
- » Position the top of the screen near eye level (see detail 3). Bifocal wearers may need to lower the screen or talk to a qualified health professional about glasses customized for computer work.
- » Consider using a document holder to position your documents near eye level.



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TO MINIMIZE EYE STRAIN, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Position your monitor about an arm's length away from you when seated comfortably in front of it.
- » Avoid glare by placing your monitor away from light sources that produce glare, or use window blinds to control light levels.
- » Remember to clean your screen. If you wear glasses, clean them as well.
- » Adjust your monitor's brightness and/or contrast.



- » If your computer program can allow you to do so, adjust on screen font sizes to make viewing more comfortable for you.
- » Physical forces continuously interact with our bodies. We may think that only high-impact forces, such as car crashes, are likely to injure our bodies. However, low-impact forces may also result in injuries, discomfort, and fatigue if they are repeated or experienced over long periods of time.

SOME TYPES OF LOW-IMPACT FORCES INCLUDE:

- » **Dynamic force:** A force that you exert through movement, such as pressing the keys while typing or clicking the mouse.
- » **Static force:** A force that you maintain for a period of time, such as holding your mouse or cradling the phone.
- » **Contact force:** A force that occurs when you rest on an edge or hard surface, such as resting your wrists on the edge of your desk.

TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF LOW-IMPACT FORCES, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Type with a light touch, keeping your hands and fingers, relaxed, because it takes little effort to activate keyboard keys. Use a light touch when clicking a mouse button or when using a joystick or other gaming controllers.
- » Hold the mouse with a relaxed hand and do not grip the mouse tightly.
- » Avoid resting your palms or wrists on any type of surface while typing. The palm rest, if provided, should only be used during breaks from typing.
- » Relax your arms and hands when you are not typing or using your mouse. Do not rest your arms and hands on edges, such as the edge of your desk.
- » Adjust your chair so the seat does not press into the back of your knees (see detail 4).



- » If your chair has armrests, they should be adjusted to allow your arms to fall naturally at your side with your elbows/forearms supported. Avoid armrests that push your shoulders up.
- » **DO NOT** cradle the telephone with your shoulder. If you have a telephone cradle, it should be removed. This type of mechanism on a telephone encourages bad habits. If you have to talk on the telephone and work on the computer simultaneously, use a speakerphone. If a speakerphone is not an option, you may need a telephone headset.

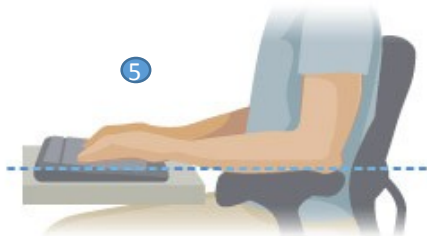


TO PROMOTE COMFORTABLE LEG POSTURES, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Clear away items from beneath your desk to allow comfortable leg positioning and movement.
- » Use a footrest if your feet do not rest comfortably on the floor.

TO PROMOTE COMFORTABLE SHOULDER AND ARM POSTURES, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Place your keyboard and mouse or trackball at the same height; these should be at about elbow level. Your upper arms should fall relaxed at your sides (see detail 5).
- » When typing, center your keyboard in front of your with your mouse or trackball located close to it.
- » Place frequently used items comfortably within arm's reach.



TO VARY YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES AND TO WORK PRODUCTIVELY, TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- » Plan your work so that you are not doing the same thing for extended periods of time, such as performing the same activity or using the same part of your body.
- » Taking breaks can help your body recover from any activity and may help you avoid MSD. The length and frequency of breaks that are right for you depend on the the of work you are doing. For an example, just changing tasks, from sitting while typing while standing and talking on the phone, can help some muscles relax while others remain productive.

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