



Ergonomics at Home and Work

Setting yourself up for success in the office

Often our successes are dependent on our energy levels and our overall well-being, and our energy levels and well-being are contingent on how well we treat ourselves. Have you set yourself up for success in the office? Are you taking care of yourself at work? Take a look around your workstation. Is it arranged to support neutral postures and good body mechanics? If not, you could be making yourself tired and wearing yourself out just sitting at your desk! Let's talk about managing your workstation to your advantage.

More and more workstations are equipped with adjustable equipment. But the successful management of your workstation is not just in having adjustability; it's in setting up the equipment correctly. Your workstation should be configured to provide your body with supported neutral postures. When your body is supported in a neutral posture, you expend less energy on body mechanics and fidgeting. You allow yourself to reserve your energy for getting the job done. So, what does the proper workstation set-up look like?

1. Monitor Screen Top – positioned slightly below eye level, lower if you wear bifocals. This supports a neutral neck posture.
2. Body Alignment – centered in front of the monitor and keyboard. This supports a neutral body posture and eliminates twisting.
3. Forearms – level of tilted down slightly. This supports neutral shoulder and arm postures.
4. Lower Back – supported by the chair. With the chair's lumbar support at your belt line, the chair can support the natural curves of your spine.
5. Wrists – neutral posture – wrist rests are for resting. Wrist should be slightly above the wrist rest and in line with the forearms when typing or completing data entry. This supports a neutral wrist posture.
6. Legs – horizontal – this may require the use of a footrest. Maintaining your upper legs on a horizontal plane supports a neutral hip and spine posture. Crossing your legs tilts the pelvic bone and causes the spine to move out of its neutral posture and places stress on the nerves.
7. Feet – resting flat on the floor or on a footrest. This posture in conjunction with the horizontal leg posture that allows the chair to properly support your back.

The knee well of the desk should be kept clear of clutter, so your knees and feet fit under the desk in front of you. Use an in-line document holder that sits between the keyboard/keyboard tray and monitor. It should be aligned with the midline of your body, so you only need to look down to see the documents and raise your eyes to see the screen.

Working from home

As the response to the COVID-19 coronavirus grows, more organizations are having employees work remotely. If you're one of those employees, take a minute and review this safety talk so you can set yourself up to work comfortably at home.

It's important to understand that sometimes the things we do at home can lead to symptoms that show up at work. That's why the principles of computer ergonomics are essentially the same whether you're working in the office or at home. To achieve maximum comfort when using your electronic devices at home you should:

- Keep your arms close to your body with your elbows bent at about a 90° angle
- Keep your wrists straight
- Sit with your knees bent at about a 90° angle with your feet resting comfortably
- Support the curve of your back (lumbar)
- Minimize the bend in your neck
- Vary your posture
- Take frequent breaks

Recovery time

Microbreaks are critical when working on a computer. Moving around increases blood flow to your muscles which reduces muscle fatigue. Change your position often and stretch.

Set up for success tips

Here are some valuable tips to help you work ergonomically smart at home:

- If you have a computer workstation at home, make this your first option instead of your tablet or phone.
- While stretched out on the sofa, position device to achieve a 90° bend in your arms with wrists straight.
- When looking at the laptop or table screen, adjust the screen tilt to improve the distance from your eyes to the screen and if needed, increase the text size to reduce the bend of your neck.
- If you use your laptop exclusively at home, consider getting a monitor, ergonomic keyboard, and mouse to go with it.

In all cases, make sure to support your lower back (lumbar). If you have an adjustable chair, position the lumbar support at the curve of your lower back. When sitting on the sofa or a lounge chair, you can use a rolled-up towel or pillow.