

Office Safety

- Office Ergonomics -

Ergonomics is the study of equipment design and arrangement so that people will interact with the equipment in a healthy, comfortable, and efficient manner. In an office setting, ergonomics is primarily associated with the fit of the workstation to the employee. Proper adjustments to elements of the workstation may prevent repetitive stress disorders and will result in a more productive work environment. Below are some considerations that may help one determine if adjustments are needed for your workstation.

Computer Monitor

- The top of the display portion of the monitor should be at or slightly lower than the level of the user's eyes.
- If you use a document holder, place it close to the monitor. Also, the document holder should be at the same height as the monitor.
- The monitor should be kept at a distance of 18 to 24 inches from the user.

Chair

- The height of the chair should allow the user to rest the entire sole of his shoe on the floor or footrest, with the back of the knee slightly higher than the seat of the chair.
- The seat pan of the chair should be slightly concave, with a rounded edge.
- The backrest should provide support to both the lower and upper back of the user.
- Armrests should be adjusted to allow the user to rest his elbows while the arms are extended in a neutral (i.e., flat) posture to the keyboard and mouse.

Keyboard and Mouse

- The keyboard and mouse should be placed at the same height to avoid unnecessary reaching by the user.
- Avoid using the "feet" on the bottom of the keyboard, as this promotes the bending of the wrists to reach keys at the top of the keyboard. A position that keeps the elbow, forearm, wrist and fingers neutral will minimize the potential for future repetitive motion disorders (e.g., carpal tunnel syndrome.)

General Considerations

- Be sure that the chair, keyboard/mouse, and computer monitor are arranged in parallel. If the monitor is at a different angle than the keyboard, the user will need to twist his neck and upper torso to view the screen. Over time, this twisting motion may lead to injury.
- If the workstation includes a window, avoid placing the computer monitor in a position where the light from the window serves as a "backlight." If the monitor is placed in a location with a significant amount of light behind it, the eyes of the user must work harder to see the screen. Over time this can contribute to the development of vision problems associated with eye strain. Instead, either place the monitor perpendicular to the window or use the blinds to minimize the effort required to view the screen.

Resources

- <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html>

