

CHECK-UP FOR YOUR WORKSTATION

OFFICE ERGONOMICS

Whether you have been located at your workstation for a while, or you are new to your job, take time to adjust your computer and the other tools that you use daily. Review the following items in order to give you and your workstation a “check-up.”

1. IS YOUR CHAIR HEIGHT RIGHT?

To begin, adjust your chair so that your feet are on the floor and your knees are at or slightly below your hip joint level. Now, double-check this chair height with the other portions of your desk to make sure you are not too low to work at them. If this chair height is OK, move to step 2.

If the chair height is not OK, raise your chair so you can work at the set height of your desk. However, you'll need some foot support... refer to Item 3 for more help.

2. ARE YOUR HANDS AT THE RIGHT HEIGHT FOR THE KEYBOARD?

For Workstations with a Fixed-Height Computer Keyboard

With this type of arrangement, the computer keyboard and mouse are located on the desk surface. Begin by checking to see if your elbows (when held at the sides of your body) are at the same height as the home row of keys on the keyboard. If not, you'll need to raise or lower the chair height so that the elbows and your hands are at about the same height. This will place your forearms at a near-horizontal level. More importantly, this helps to keep your hands and wrists in a “neutral posture.”

For Workstations With an Adjustable-Height Computer Keyboard

Workstations with pull-out or sliding keyboard trays can usually be adjusted for height. Use the tray's mechanism (knob, etc.) to loosen the tray, then move it up or down until you can position the home keys at your elbow height (see paragraph above).

3. ARE YOUR FEET LOCATED/ POSITIONED CORRECTLY?

After you've corrected the chair height for your keyboard use, your feet should be on the floor and the knees equal to or slightly lower than your hip joint. If not, you will need to get some kind of foot support. Commercially available foot rests are height and angle-adjustable. If a foot rest isn't immediately available, use something that is the correct thickness for the amount of support that you need. However, be sure you request a foot support as soon as possible.

4. DO YOU HAVE ADEQUATE BACK SUPPORT?

Sitting is physically demanding on certain parts of the body. One of them is the back. A chair with little or poorly designed back support can make you fidgety, and add to your discomfort.

The chair has an up - down adjustment for the back (lumbar) rest. The portion of the back rest support that protrudes forward is anatomically designed to fit into the lumbar area of your lower back. This area is usually around the belt line (it's the forward - curved area of the lower back just above the tailbone area). Adjusting the height of the back rest to match your lumbar area will actually transfer some of your seated weight from your seat and upper legs to your back, making sitting more comfortable and with less fidgeting, tenderness or numbness that can occur when seated in a poorly fitted chair.

When you sit down, position yourself on the entire seat. Sit all the way back and fit into the space between the seat and the back rest so the lumbar support can support your back.

5. SHOULD YOU USE A WRIST REST?

Some people can hold their posture without support. But if you find that you rest your hands on the front of the keyboard or on the desk surface, then you should get some sort of support.

Get a rest with some “give” to it (not hard plastic or rubber). Try separating the wrist rest from the keyboard by 1-2 inches. This allows support for your arms without concentrating pressure on your wrists.

6. IS YOUR MONITOR LOCATED CORRECTLY?

Position the monitor screen so it’s vertical or at a slight tilt to prevent glare and yet give you a clear view of the screen. The top of the monitor should be set at eye level or slightly lower, and should be positioned for viewing with your head comfortably erect and balanced. This eliminates stress on your neck and shoulders.

If you wear bifocal glasses, check to see if your lower bifocal correction is for monitor viewing distance. You may need to lower the monitor a little more if this is the case. (Be sure to inform your eye care provider that you use computers in your job; they can adjust your prescription to meet these needs.)

Frequently check your brightness and contrast settings on your monitor screen. If necessary use an anti-glare filter and keep the screen surface free of dust.

7. ARE YOUR PAPERS FLAT ON THE DESK?

This is OK for writing, but for typing they need to be tilted so you can read them at the same distance and angle as the monitor screen. Constantly changing eye focus distance and direction from a flat, written page to an upright screen can be very tiring on the eyes. (Eyestrain is a leading complaint of computer users.)

Obtain a document holder that meets your needs for the size of the paper you work from, and that can be located at a similar distance and angle as the monitor screen.

8. WHERE’S THE PHONE (AND THE CALCULATOR, HOLE PUNCH, REFERENCE BOOKS, ETC.)?

Items that are not in close range of your reach allow you to stretch and move around. However, take caution for items that you use regularly. The most common items used should be within a comfortable reach range.

There are three reach ranges:

- **The Frequent Reach Range** is for those items used almost constantly. This distance is the one that can be reached with your hands while your elbows stay near your sides. A rule of thumb is that if your elbows go further forward than the front of your torso, you’re beyond the Frequent Reach Range. (*Important - your computer mouse needs to be in the frequent reach range!*) You probably are using your mouse as much as your keyboard, make sure it’s always within easy reach.
- **The Middle Reach Range** is for those items that are used occasionally. This area is defined by reaching in an arc with both hands with the elbows nearly straight. The telephone, calculator, smaller references, etc. all usually fall in this area; but your job needs will tell you what should be located where.
- **The Far Reach Range** is beyond the outstretched arms, and is meant only for the rarely used items. In fact, for the heavy and rarely used items (e.g., reference books); they should be located so that you will have to stand up and use two hands.

9. ARE YOU STIFF AT THE END OF THE DAY?

Stiffness is not uncommon for anyone who sits relatively still most of the day. If your job doesn’t involve a lot of movement, then you need to make some minor changes.

Some people are creative and set up their tasks so that they are moving between different tasks (filing, copying, etc.) periodically. Others need help introducing changes. That’s where stretching comes in. It’s a good thing to do because it helps your circulation, eases muscle tension and keeps that stiff feeling from setting in. Every hour is a good time to stretch, and a minute or two is all it takes.

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THE 60 SECOND STRETCH



Stretch shoulders and arms by interlacing fingers behind your back, palms facing your body, and slowly turn elbows inward while straightening your arms.



Lateral Neck Stretching - Tilt your head first to the right, hold for 10 seconds. Then tilt your head to left, hold for 10 seconds. You should avoid lifting your shoulder to your head.



Put your palms together in front of your chest. Slowly lower your hands until you feel a mild stretch in your forearms.



Stretch arms and upper back. Straighten arms in front of you without interlacing fingers and with palms facing toward body.



Chin Glide - Without lifting your chin up or down, glide your head straight back. Repeat slowly 5 times.