

WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS

Preventing musculoskeletal injuries and discomfort related to computer use, is a priority for the College and we are providing the following information to assist you to work safely in the course of your daily activities.

Ergonomics can be defined as fitting the job to the worker. Not all workers are the same size and everyone has limits. Ergonomics aims to design workstations, work processes, equipment, and tools to fit you. As a worker, it is important that you know how to adjust your office workstation to suit your needs.

Extensive computer use and using computers in awkward postures¹ for prolonged periods increases the risk of muscle fatigue, discomfort and musculoskeletal injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, epicondylitis (golfer/tennis elbow), neck and shoulder pain.

LEARNING TO ADJUST YOUR COMPUTER WORKSTATION

Check this link from Health Canada to print the ergonomic checklist for adjusting and adapting your computer workstation. Post it near your workstation for future reference, and make regular adjustments to your workstation as needed.

¹ E.g. Bent, flexed or extended arms, wrists, neck.

[Health Canada Checklist for Adjusting Your Workstation](#)

This checklist provides information you can use to assess your own workstation and contains recommendations for making necessary adjustments. Remember, keeping your arms, wrists, legs and upper body (head, neck, back) in neutral² postures can be done by making simple workstation adjustments.

By adjusting your workstation into an optimum ergonomic position, you will eliminate awkward postures and reduce the risk of experiencing pain or discomfort while performing computer work.

REST BREAKS

Periodic rest breaks from repetitive tasks, such as keyboarding or lifting, are necessary to allow your body time to recover from the micro stresses experienced from performing the task. These breaks are simply a matter of changing to a different task that doesn't involve the same repetitive motion.

A five minute break every hour is generally recommended for computer users (Note: Taking frequent short breaks is preferred to taking fewer longer breaks).

² E.g. No unnatural bending, flexing, extending, twisting or awkward reaches

An effective tool to remind you to take a short break is a computer program that “pops up” on the computer screen. Work Safe BC has an excellent program called "Work Safe Sam" which has a series of useful and simple ergonomic safety tips that pop up on the computer screen. The frequency of the reminders and sound features can also be adjusted to suit your preferences and it will not interfere with your computer work.

Work Safe Sam Stretch Prompter can be downloaded onto your computer from the following link: [Micro Break Stretch Prompter](#)



Work Safe Sam  *"Stretch Prompter"*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Making adjustments to your workstation and your work methods before signs of pain or discomfort appear, is the best prevention. Be sure to notify your supervisor and ask for help immediately if you experience any problems.

For recommendations on safe laptop use; selecting document holders; keyboard trays; mouse tips; and how to reduce glare at your computer, refer to the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers [Office Ergonomics Handbook](#) .

Contact the OHS office at extension 2246 if you have any questions regarding the above or would like an ergonomic review of your work area. Office ergonomics training can also be arranged through the OHS office at extension 2246 or 2225.

Remember to always...

Think Safe!

Be Safe!

Occupational Health & Safety Department

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