

TECHNICAL UPDATE

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OFFICE ERGONOMIC TIPS TO PREVENT PAIN

Ergonomics is the science of designing a workstation to fit within the capabilities and limitations of the worker. The goal is to design your office workspace so that it fits you and allows for a comfortable working environment for maximum productivity and efficiency.

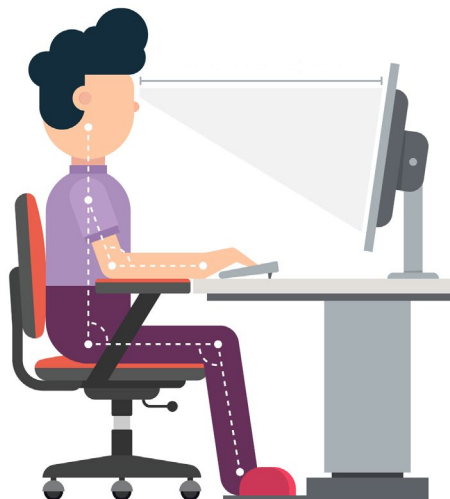
To understand the best way to set up a computer workstation, it is helpful to understand the concept of neutral body positioning. This is a comfortable working posture in which your joints are naturally aligned. Working with the body in a neutral position reduces stress and strain on the muscles, tendons, and skeletal system. It also reduces your risk of developing a musculoskeletal disorder.

The following are important considerations when attempting to maintain neutral body postures while working at a desk or on a computer:

- Hands, wrists, and forearms are straight, in-line, and parallel to the floor.
- Head is level, forward facing, balanced, and in line with the torso.
- Shoulders are relaxed, arms hang with elbows slightly forward and bent at 90 degrees.
- Feet are grounded and supported by floor or footrest.
- Move your work chair close to your work to avoid leaning and reaching.
- Back is fully supported with good lumbar support while sitting upright.
- Knees are just slightly lower than the hips, with the feet slightly forward.
- Monitor should be placed directly in front of you at 20–28 inches from your face, with the top at eye level and a small upwards tilt.

Standing desks have become very popular and there is evidence that alternating sitting and standing improves the posture in your shoulders, neck, and upper back. In addition to reducing aches and stiffness that come from sitting all day, standing also has a positive effect on reducing diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. For optimal energy levels and productivity, it is recommended for every 1 to 2 hours you sit in the office, 1 hour should be spent standing. Try to alternate between sitting and standing every 30 to 60 minutes.

Regardless of how good your working posture is, sitting or standing still in the same position for prolonged periods is not healthy. Get up and frequently move throughout the day and practice safe stretching exercises often. If working on a laptop, use an auxiliary keyboard and mouse to maintain a proper ergonomic setup. Also, home office workers should use adjustable ergonomic chairs.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

Hours spent working on a computer will take a toll on our bodies. Setting up an ergonomic workstation and maintaining a neutral body posture can help offset this toll. CTSI offers several video courses on workplace ergonomics such as Seated Worker Ergonomics Basics and Ergonomic Essentials for the Office at www.ctsi.org. For assistance on creating an ergonomic work environment, please contact any member of the CTSI Loss Control Team at (303) 861-0507.