

Computer Ergonomics

Technology has had a profound effect on the way we live and work. As a result, we are spending more time sitting and using computers. This time spent on computers has greatly increased the occurrence of musculoskeletal illnesses and injuries that can occur at work and at home. With ever changing technology we need to take into account how we set up this technology.

The overall result of technological changes is that we're spending more time on our computers. The risk of musculoskeletal discomfort increases by using the computer as little as one hour a day.

So what exactly is computer ergonomics? In a broad sense, computer ergonomics applies learned science to work station design in an effort to maximize



productivity while reducing operator fatigue and discomfort. That takes care of the high tech answer. The answer I prefer to give when performing an ergonomic consultation is, computer ergonomics focuses on your personal comfort and safety when performing your daily tasks. In turn, when you are perusing e-bay for that perfect item or performing significant typing on your computer, you do not experience any pain or discomfort.

Ergonomic principles are important and what needs to be remembered is that most repetitive stress injuries are avoidable. By attending to a few basic principles, you can enhance your comfort and productivity and

reduce your risk of computer workstation injuries.

General Ergonomic Guidelines

- Blink! Try to blink more often to keep your eyes lubricated.
- Look away from the screen and focus on distant objects periodically.
- Don't sit in one position at the computer for extended periods.
- Place your monitor directly in front of you
- Position the top of the screen at or slightly below eye level.
- Place the screen approximately an arm's length away.
- Tilt the screen slightly downward to avoid glare.
- Reposition the monitor so the brightest sources of light are not directly in front or in back of you.
- Place the keyboard directly in front of you.
- Lay the keyboard flat or slope it down away from you.
- Keep your wrists straight and relaxed.
- Place feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- Place the lumbar roll of chair to fit the lumbar curve of your back.
- Place the back of your knees a fist's width from the front edge of your chair.

Computer ergonomics is an important aspect of maintaining a safe and productive life. Since we use computers more often we all need to take into account how we have set these workstations up. The more ergonomically correct they are the less likely you will experience a musculoskeletal pain and that e-mail to your favorite aunt will be more enjoyable.

*Jim Mecham, MS, OTR/L, AEP
Director Ergonomics and Industrial Rehabilitation
OccuCare Systems and Solutions*