



BACK FACTS: Workplace Ergonomics

As the workload increases, so do repetitive actions like keyboarding and answering the phone. These routine tasks can add a level of physical stress to the emotional and mental stress of getting the job done. In fact, repetitive strain injuries have skyrocketed in the last two decades due to the increasing reliance on workplace technology.



The good news is that a few simple changes to your office set-up can help make your job easier, safer and more efficient.

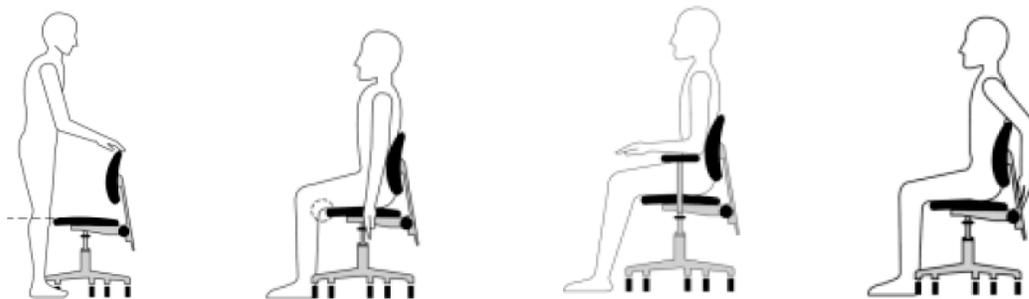
Keyboard. Position it above your lap. Ensure that you can type with your arms relaxed, close to your body with elbows bent at 90 degrees and wrists level.

Computer Monitor. Position it directly in front of you. Keep it free of dirt and smudges in order to reduce glare. Allow the muscles in your eyes to relax by following the 20/20/20 rule: take a 20 second break every 20 minutes and focus on an object that is at least 20 feet away from you. Make sure to use proper corrective eyewear to avoid leaning or straining forward to see the computer screen.

Mouse. Some workers have a vice-like grip on the mouse. Try using a light grip to avoid strain. When you move it around, use your elbow to guide it instead of your wrist.

Telephone. Use your hand to support the telephone against your ear and alternate sides regularly. Do not cradle the phone between your ear and your shoulder. If you are on the phone a lot, consider using a headset or speaker to reduce strain on your neck and arms.

Chair. Sit upright and all the way to the back. Place a support cushion or roll against the arch of your back for lumbar spine support. Here are some tips to help you adjust your chair.



1. Stand in front of the chair and adjust the height so that the highest point of the seat is just below your kneecap.

2. Sit on the chair and make sure that your knees are bent at approximately a 100 degree angle when your feet are flat on the floor.
3. Adjust the backrest forwards and backwards as well as up and down until it fits the hollow in your lower back.
4. Sit upright with your arms hanging by your sides. Bend your elbows at about a right angle and adjust the armrest height until they barely touch the undersides of the elbows. Remove the armrest from the chair if the right level cannot be achieved or if the armrests, in their lowest adjustment, elevate your elbows even slightly.

Take a break. Try not to sit in any one position for a long period of time. Take a quick stretch break or change position every 3- to 45 minutes. For a quick and easy stretch, stand up and raise your arms above your head.

Canada's chiropractors – here to help

Chiropractors can help prevent workplace problems by advising you on how to set up an ergonomic workstation. Should you suffer a repetitive strain injury, a chiropractor can also provide treatment for your pain.

Fact: 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetime. If required, a chiropractor can treat your pain through a variety of methods. These can include: spinal and joint adjustment, modalities such as ultrasound or TENS, soft tissue therapy and therapeutic exercises.

For more information, or to locate a chiropractor near you, please visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association's website www.ccachiro.org

Reduce the strain to lessen the pain.

The CANADIAN CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

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