

WEEKLY UPDATE SUBMISSION

YOUR HEALTH & SAFETY

OFFICE ERGONOMICS 101

COMPUTER WORK – Monitors, Document Holders, Workstations

“Leonardo da Vinci is considered by many to be the ‘father of ergonomics’. That’s how long the study of ergonomics has interested scholars.” Global Total Office – Consumer Information (2001)

As we continue with the series of ergonomic topics, our focus this week will include computer monitors, copy stands, telephones and workstations.

Monitors

The position or location of our computer monitors can be a contributor to eye and neck strain. If you work on a computer, it is advisable to have your vision tested at least every two years and more frequently if you experience changes in your vision. Describe your work to your ophthalmologist or optometrist to determine your visual needs.

a)Viewing distance – the distance between your eyes and the monitor should be approximately arm’s length or between 18” and 24”, and straight ahead of your keyboard position.

b)Height – the first line of text on your screen should be at eye level

Monitor height can be adjusted by sitting it on top of either a desktop CPU or an adjustable monitor stand. Tilting your head upwards or downwards to read the screen should be avoided.

c)Position – to avoid glare from windows, your workstation should be positioned so that your monitor is not facing the window. Monitors should be perpendicular to window lighting and parallel to overhead office lighting. The angle of the monitor should not reflect any glare from overhead lighting.

d)Visuals - Become familiar with the brightness and contrast controls on your monitor and try different settings that best suite your comfort level.

Ensure that your monitor screen is cleaned regularly to prevent blurring of screen images and added eyestrain. Remember to take a break from lengthy reading tasks by focusing your eyes on more distant objects from time to time. If your office environment is dry or the air quality less than optimum, this could affect the lubrication in your eyes. This is especially noticeable if you wear contact lenses. If this is the case, it is recommended that you blink more frequently and speak to your eye doctor about eye drops.

Document Holders

The position of documents that you’re reading or copying from can also contribute to neck or eyestrain by repetitively holding your head in an awkward position. Place your documents as close to the side of the monitor as possible, at the same distance from your eyes and at the same vertical angle. Document holders will allow adjustable positions and keep the documents in a glare-free angle. If your work requires a large volume of data entry, you may want to consider moving the monitor slightly to either the right or left and slide the document holder right beside it. In this position, you’re viewing the primary source (the document) more often than the entry on the monitor. You may also consider a document holder that can be positioned between your monitor and the keyboard as long as you’re not tilting your head downwards.

Telephones

In a multi-task job, your telephone is probably used frequently. If you do use your telephone frequently, then it should be within easy reach and should be held in the most comfortable position as possible. If your job requires you to write or use the computer at the same time, consider the investment of a headset or use the speaker feature of the phone. This option may not be practical if you share office space with other employees or if your work is of a confidential nature. Cradling the phone

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between your ear and shoulder is an awkward position and may cause unnecessary neck and shoulder strain. Like the controls on your monitor, you may want to consider adjusting the volume on your phone.

Cell phone use can also be a contributor to unnecessary neck strain if you cradle the phone between your ear and shoulder while using both hands to perform other tasks. Consider hands-free alternatives to prevent injury.

Multi-tasking and Multi-task Work Stations

Work stations that are shared by multiple staff members should be the most adjustable to accommodate the needs of all users. This of course would include adjustable chairs and footrests and keyboard supports.

Those who perform a variety of tasks should evaluate all their tasks, priorities and frequencies. This can be done by observing your workflow throughout a typical day and identify distinctive and repetitive task patterns. Organize the patterns into their intended and frequency of use. This will result in factors to consider when organizing your work space for a productive and strain-free workday.

Precaution is better than cure. ~Edward Coke

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