

WEEKLY UPDATE SUBMISSION

YOUR HEALTH & SAFETY

OFFICE ERGONOMICS 101

ERGONOMICS

“Fitting the worker to the job, not the job to the worker”

Ergonomics is the science that studies people’s mental and physical capacities and limitations as they relate to their work environment, or “the science of people at work”. The goal of ergonomics is to create an efficient work environment that prevents work related health problems. Poor work conditions exist when the “work” is incompatible with one’s body. These conditions may cause discomfort, fatigue, and consequently, injury. Ergonomics isn’t limited to office environments. It includes all types of employment and tasks where physical strain and repetition of physical actions lowers our productivity and increases the risk of injury, like RSIs or Repetitive Strain Injuries.

THE CHAIR

Like our shoes, our office chair is supposed to provide support and comfort for the task or journey ahead. If it’s not comfortable, or adjusted to suit our frame, we’ll compensate in ways that could cause discomfort or injury. If the majority of our work is performed in a seated position, then the selection of a chair should take priority over other office furniture.

Chair Selection Tips

Look for the following features:

-a 5-pedastal base (offers more stability)

-a seat pan that

- a)is wide enough to comfortably support your frame, and
- b)long enough to support 75% of your leg length (you should be able to sit against the back of the chair and still be able to fit your fist between the front of the seat pan and the back of your knee), and
- c)vertically adjustable (so that your thighs are parallel to the floor)

-a seat back that

- a)is tall enough to support your hip to shoulder distance, and
- b)offers a well-formed lumbar support to maintain the natural ‘S’ curve of your spine, and
- b)offers adjustability from a 90^o to a 110^o tilt

-arm rests that

- a)adjust vertically to suit your shoulder to elbow length, without impeding the movement of your arms while typing or writing (horizontal adjustments are also important where you need to move the armrests away from your frame or allow freer movement of your arms)

-casters that

- a)are suited to the flooring in your office (most chairs are equipped with casters designed for carpeted floors, which can be exchanged for casters designed for smoother surfaces like tile or anti-static mats)

Remember, just because a product is advertised as ‘ergonomically designed’, it isn’t if it doesn’t work for you!

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