

Workspace Evaluation

Use the following checklist to identify whether your workspace is ergonomically suitable for reducing the risks for musculo-skeletal disorders and repetitive motion strain. If you answer “no” to any item follow the corresponding suggestions given after the checklist.

1. Are you able to change position throughout the day (e.g. alternate sitting or standing)?
 Yes No
2. Do you adjust your keyboard and/or monitor position as appropriate when you change posture?
 Yes No
3. Do you incorporate variety into your daily schedule (e.g. keying, talking on the phone, photocopying, moving around or changing postures)?
 Yes No
4. Does the back of your chair provide good lumbar support to the arch in the small of your back?
 Yes No
5. When you sit in your chair with your back against the backrest, is there clearance between the backs of your knees and the edge of your chair?
 Yes No
6. When you sit in your chair, are your thighs approximately parallel to the floor?
 Yes No
7. Are your feet supported by the floor or a footrest when you sit in your chair?
 Yes No
8. When seated at your workstation is there sufficient room underneath the work surface or keyboard tray for your legs and knees?
 Yes No
9. Are your monitor and documents located directly in front of you and in the recommended viewing area?
 Yes No
10. If you often talk on the phone for long periods of time, or while keying or writing, do you have access to headsets or speakerphones?
 Yes No
11. Are your shoulders relaxed with elbows close to your torso while keying?
 Yes No
12. Are your elbows relaxed and resting by your torso when you key or use a mouse?
 Yes No
13. Do you key and mouse with your hands and wrists in a neutral position? (Forearm, wrist and hand form a fairly straight line)
 Yes No
14. Would you describe your typing style as a “light” touch on the keys?
 Yes No
15. Is your viewing distance to your monitor 20 inches (50 cm) or more?
 Yes No
16. Are there any reflections or glare on your monitor screen or is light shining into your eyes?
 Yes No
17. Do you have appropriate illumination when reading printed materials or when reading from your monitor?
 Yes No
18. Have you had an eye exam in the last two years?
 Yes No
19. If you wear bifocals or trifocals, can you see the monitor comfortably?
 Yes No

Suggested Solutions

If you answered “no” for any item in the checklist, it means that you can take simple steps to reduce the risk and improve your workspace.

- 1. Change Positions:** You should stand up to perform a stretch or two each hour while working on your computer. Alternate tasks during the day (e.g., from keying to copying to making phone calls, etc.). Incorporating movement into your day improves circulation and helps prevent fatigue and discomfort.
- 2. Adjust Workstation:** Changing postures may require you to readjust your chair, keyboard or monitor for overall comfort, circulation and fatigue reduction. For example, moving from the upright to the reclined posture may require you to lower your seat height to maintain foot support.
- 3. Varied Activities:** Alternate tasks during the day (e.g., keying to copying to making phone calls, etc.). Incorporating movement into your day improves circulation and helps prevent fatigue and discomfort.
- 4. Lumbar Support:** If possible, adjust the back of your chair to reposition the lumbar area to better fit your lower back. Use a lumbar support (cushion or pillow).
- 5. Seat Depth:** If possible, adjust your chair seat depth so you can sit fully back in your chair. Sometimes this is accomplished by moving the seat back and forth, and sometimes by repositioning the back of the chair. Obtain a lumbar accessory that will position you farther forward in your chair and still provide good back support.
- 6. Seat Height:** Raise or lower your chair seat until your thighs and buttocks are evenly supported. If raising your chair, make sure your feet remain supported. If your chair doesn't adjust low enough, use a foot rest.
- 7. Foot Support:** Lower your chair until you feel the floor supporting your feet. Maintain proper orientation to the keyboard/mouse. If not possible, obtain a footrest.
- 8. Leg Room:** An adjustable keyboard tray may provide more thigh clearance. Lower your chair. Raise your work surface. Clear out materials, wires, equipment, and papers stored within your leg space.
- 9. Monitor Position:** Move your monitor directly behind your keyboard. The only exception to this rule is if you view your copy more than your monitor. Then, consider placing the copy directly behind your keyboard and the monitor slightly off to one side. Use a copy holder which accommodates the printed material you are reading (e.g., double wide or extra sturdy for heavy items). Position copy within easy view.
- 10. Phone Use:** If you *infrequently* cradle the phone between your head and shoulder, consider attaching a phone hand cradle. If you *frequently* cradle the phone between your head and shoulder, consider obtaining a phone head set.
- 11. Relaxed Shoulders:** Adjust the armrests on your chair so your arms are gently supported. Adjust the height of your keyboard, mouse or other input devices to closely match your seated elbow height.
- 12. Arms by Your Side:** Relocate your keyboard and mouse so you can reach them with your upper arms relaxed by your side. Sit closer to your keyboard and mouse. This may require you to adjust your armrests, work surface height, and other equipment. Make sure you maintain adequate thigh clearance.
- 13. Keying:** Adjust your chair or keyboard tray so your wrists and forearms are in a neutral position, where forearm, wrist and hand form a straight line. Install an articulating keyboard tray. Obtain a wrist rest.
- 14. Keying:** Develop a “light” touch when keying and using the mouse. Enlist the aid of a coworker to help you notice when you are “attacking” the keys. Be especially watchful when working

in a stressful situation, such as working under a deadline. Shake your hands, stretch, or massage them to relax your fingers and hands.

15. **Viewing Distance:** Adjust your viewing distance so there is at least 20" between you and your monitor. Make sure you can clearly see the characters on your monitor. Adjust your monitor brightness and contrast settings to display characters clearly. Clean your screen.
16. **Monitor Glare:** Here are ways to reduce glare on your monitor: Decrease overall background lighting, relocate overhead and task lighting, install or adjust window curtains and blinds, install a glare screen on your monitor, change the colors on your monitor. Lighter background colors tend to reflect less. Change the brightness and contrast settings on your monitor to maximize contrast and make the characters easier to see. Your monitor is best viewed when
- it is at a right angle to your window, not in front of the window. If your monitor is tilted upward, tip the screen down. Clean your screen.
17. **Lighting:** Reduce background lighting to a level suitable for reading the monitor. Add task lighting where more illumination is required to read printed materials.
18. **Vision Correction:** Schedule an eye exam and tell your eye care professional how much time you spend working at a computer. Measure the distance from your eyes to your monitor and inform your eye care professional. Talk with your eye care professional about vision correction options for computer use.
19. **Bifocals/Trifocals:** Talk with your eye care professional about vision correction options for computer use.