



Remote Ergonomics: Tips and Tricks at Home

Brian Mitchell, Risk Control Specialist, CEAS

Remote Work Area: While it can be tempting to lay on the couch or in bed when working from home, this is not a proper ergonomic position to be in when trying to work. Try to set aside a room or at least a desk/table that is used as your main workstation when working at home. This will help you maintain good working posture while using your laptop remotely.

Typing Posture: Ideal typing posture is as follows: shoulders relaxed, elbows by your side, forearms at a 90-120 degree bend. Elevated shoulders and extending of the arms are things you want to avoid at your desk or table. If the desk or table is too high for you, raise the chair you are in and place a footrest or even a box under your desk to support your feet.

Laptop or Monitor Setup: Laptops were created with ease of transport in mind, not ergonomics. This is why it is not possible to be at both the correct typing height and correct screen height at the same time, without the use of additional equipment. If you have a monitor at home, connect your laptop to the monitor and line up your eyes with the top of the screen. You may still use the laptop to type, but only use the monitor screen while working. If you do not have a monitor, place your laptop on boxes, books, reams of paper, or any stable platform that can raise your laptop screen up to the correct height. A separate keyboard and mouse should be used, as the laptop keyboard and touchpad will no longer suffice once raised.

Seating Options: If you don't have an adjustable task chair at your house, try choosing a dining room chair that has a backrest, rather than a stool. This will reduce the need for your back muscles to be working all day to keep your posture upright. Try to limit the use of medicine balls as a main seating option, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.

Phone Calls: For those that must take numerous phone calls throughout the day and are now working solely on their work cell phones, try to use a pair of earphones with a microphone on them. This will reduce the possibility of awkward posture or prolonged raising of the arm when trying to take notes or type. Use speaker phone if earphones with a mic are not available.

Micro-Breaks: Being in the same position for longer than 45 minutes is considered prolonged static posture. This can lead to muscle stiffness, muscle soreness, and working posture tends to decline. It is important every 30-45 minutes to utilize micro-breaks (2-3 min) to break the posture you're in, introduce some movement of the body, and then return to your workstation. This will help limit pain or discomfort and keep you alert and in good working posture.

Additional Resources: PMA's Computer Workstation Self-Assessment is a useful tool to use while setting up your remote workstation. For convenience, this resource has been added below.

Any questions/concerns, please contact me directly:

Brian_mitchell@pmagroup.com



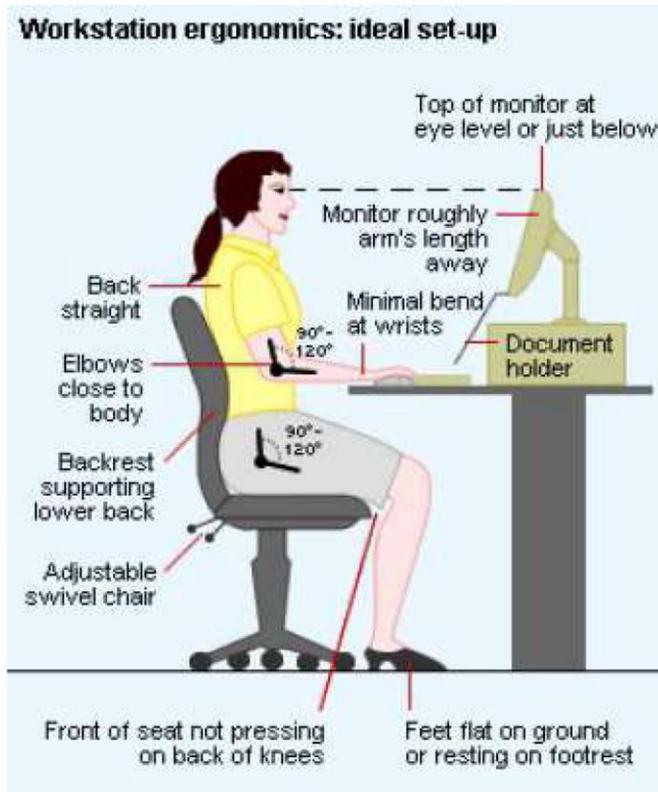
Computer Workstation Self-Evaluation

This self-evaluation checklist is proper for only preventative situations. In any situation where an injury or symptoms are already being experienced, your supervisor and a healthcare professional should be contacted for appropriate follow-up. If you cannot correct the identify deficiencies on your own, contact your PMA Risk Control Consultant or safety/ergonomics person for assistance.

| Keyboard and Mouse | | Okay |
|---|---|-------------|
| Keyboard height | Adjust keyboard height so arms and forearms are at right angles or slightly greater and forearms and hands form straight lines. | |
| Key board-to-user distance | Keyboard to-user-distance should allow user to relax shoulders with elbows hanging close to body. | |
| Keyboard slope | Position keyboard flat or slightly negatively sloped. | |
| Mouse-to-user distance | Mouse should be directly next to keyboard. | |
| Mouse height | Adjust mouse so it is close to and on the same level as the keyboard. | |
| Chair | | |
| Seat height | Adjust seat height so feet are flat on the floor or footrest, knees are bent at right angles and thighs are horizontal to the floor. | |
| Seat back | Adjust seat back so it supports the lumbar curve of the low back. | |
| Seat pan depth | Adjust seat pan depth so the front edge of the seat is about 2" - 4" From the back of the knees. | |
| Seat pan tilt | Adjust seat pan tilt so hips and tops of thighs are at right angles or slightly greater. | |
| Armrest position | Adjust armrest so that they are out of the way while typing, but may provide support during other activities (i.e. phone use, meetings, etc.) | |
| Monitor | | |
| Monitor height | Adjust monitor height so top of screen is at or slightly lower than eye level. | |
| Screen-to-user distance | Viewing distance is approximately arms distance away (24" - 30") | |
| Monitor alignment with user | Monitor and keyboard should be placed directly in front of the user | |
| Dual or Multiple Monitors | Follow 50/50 or 60/40 Rule – if work is split between monitors, center to keyboard. Or if one monitor is used more, move the monitor in front of the worker | |
| Visual comfort of screen | Monitor should be positioned to avoid glare (perpendicular to window with strong light source). | |
| Work Environment and Work Surfaces | | |
| Leg clearance at workstation | Width = 2" + hip width, height = Highest point of thighs or higher, depth = Allows proper sitting position while giving foot and knee clearance. | |
| Placement of frequently used items | Keep frequently used items (i.e. phone) close at hand. | |
| General task Lighting | Ensure lighting is not direct or overly bright | |

| Work Practices | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Frequency of microbreaks | Get out of chair at least once per hour, microbreak every 20 minute with 20 seconds of stretching. | |
| Keyboarding posture | Keep wrist straight, avoid supporting wrists on any surface while typing. | |
| Sitting posture | Upright or slightly reclined, maintain slight hollow in the lower back. | |
| Phone posture | Avoid tilting head/neck to cradle phone. Use hand to hold or wear a head set. | |
| Alternate tasks | Break up long periods of continuous computer use by performing small tasks/errands. | |

| CHECKLIST for a User-Friendly Workstation | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | ✓ ✓ | Top of screen at eye level; lower for bifocal wearers. Screen distance at arm's length (24" - 30"). |
| 2 | ✓ | Document holder adjustable to screen height or in line between keyboard and monitor. |
| 3 | ✓ ✓ | Chair backrest provides firm lower back support. Chair back and seat easily adjustable for height and tilt by user. |
| 4 | ✓ | Keyboard height promotes relaxed arms with forearms parallel to the floor. |
| 5 | ✓ ✓ | Wrist straight (neutral). Padded, movable palm rest, same height as keyboard home row, if needed. |
| 6 | ✓ ✓ | Thighs parallel to the floor. Ample legroom under work surface. |
| 7 | ✓ | Feet rest firmly on the floor or foot rest. |



IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by PMA Companies in this evaluation checklist are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter the information and suggestions to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.