

Ouch?

DON'T SLOUCH!

If you're plagued by headaches, back or neck pain or a sore wrist at the end of a work day, your posture may be to blame

Our bodies have their own unique set of dimensions and movement patterns and these influence our sitting posture at a workstation: length of trunk, length of legs, length of thigh, length of arm, visual aptitude and spinal muscle strength. A tall person may have short legs and a long trunk allowing for a relatively low sitting position, alternatively if a similar height individual has long legs and a short trunk, they will require a much higher sitting position which may then also necessitate the need for a footrest.

YOUR OFFICE WORKSTATION SHOULD

- ▶ Avoid awkward posture.
- ▶ Support those parts of the body required to perform repetitive actions in their mid-range such as the forearm and wrist.
- ▶ Help support the spine in an upright position.

PROLONGED SITTING

Sitting, especially slouching, loads the spine more than standing or walking and places it at a high risk of injury when sustained for prolonged periods of time. Prolonged slouching may increase the pressure in the abdominal cavity as well as reducing its volume. This may affect the function of the lungs and reduce their ability to expand, thereby affecting the

oxygen supply to the body and the brain. Slouching may also contribute to problems such as reflux.

The spinal muscles fatigue from prolonged sitting, causing slouching and other bad postures, with a resulting increase in spinal disc pressures and a greater risk of spinal disc degeneration and prolapse.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO

get up and move around every half hour or 45 minutes to relieve the pressure build-up on the body from prolonged sitting.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN SETTING UP A WORKSTATION

1. Seat back adjustability
2. Good lumbar support
3. Seat height adjustability
4. No excess pressure on underside of thighs and backs of knees
5. Foot support if needed
6. Space for postural change, no obstacles under desk
7. Forearms approximately horizontal
8. Minimal extension, flexion or deviation of wrists
9. Screen height and angle should allow comfortable head position
10. Space in front of keyboard to support hands/wrists during pauses in keying

Here's how to create a healthier workstation

YOUR CHAIR MUST HAVE SUITABLE LUMBAR SUPPORT TO PREVENT LOWER BACK PAIN

Lumbar support helps to maintain the normal curvature of the spine while sitting. The best chairs allow the lumbar support to be adjusted for your body. Chairs that have insufficient lumbar support can be enhanced with lumbar cushions.

THE HEIGHT OF YOUR CHAIR

in relation to your work surface is very important. Your shoulder girdle should remain relaxed, while the wrist and forearm should be just above the keyboard.

The back of your chair should be tilted backwards slightly about 5-10 degrees. This reduces the loading on the spine.

YOUR THIGHS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED

at the right length. Too long or too short will cause pressure on the blood vessels of the leg and could result in deep vein thrombosis.

ADJUST YOUR COMPUTER MONITOR HEIGHT

so that you're looking straight at the screen, not downwards or upwards. Incorrect monitor height is one of the greatest causes of neck pain, shoulder pain and headaches. You may need a monitor stand or adjustable monitor arms to put it at the correct height. The monitor should be approximately an arm's length away – not further or too close.

THE KEYBOARD SHOULD BE FLAT

to avoid your wrist being at an acute angle while typing. This is important (along with specific exercises) in the prevention of carpal tunnel syndrome.

USE A DOCUMENT HOLDER

if you're constantly referring to notes.

THERE SHOULD BE ENOUGH ROOM

underneath your desk for your legs to extend out and change posture.

HANGING LEGS STRAIN THE LOWER BACK

Don't set your chair too low to compensate for hanging feet. Use a footrest instead.

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