



Promoting a workplace that supports health, well-being, and vitality for all

When work is a pain...

Think about how you feel during your workdays. Maybe you have pain in your neck or back and feel stiff and sore when you stand up from your desk. Perhaps fatigue and irritability set in as you try to focus on projects or meeting discussions.

While there are many factors that influence how we feel during the day, the configuration of your work area – the place where you spend most of your time working, has a major effect on overall health and well-being.



Assess your desk or computer workspace

Take a close look at your work area; the place where you spend the most time working. Now think about how you sit while working. Do your shoulders hunch forward? Is your keyboard so far from you that your arms are extended while typing? Is your chair so low that your low back is rounded over, or so high that your feet are not flat on the floor? Does the lighting seem either too bright or too dim? Do you use a sit-stand desk, but still feel fatigue, aches and stiffness during and after your work days?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, an ergonomic assessment of your workstation and a consultation that includes your work habits may help you develop a healthier work environment. Even better, an ergonomics program that uses a proactive risk management approach is more beneficial because potential injuries, along with costs to both employer and employees, can be avoided when identified early.

What is ergonomics?

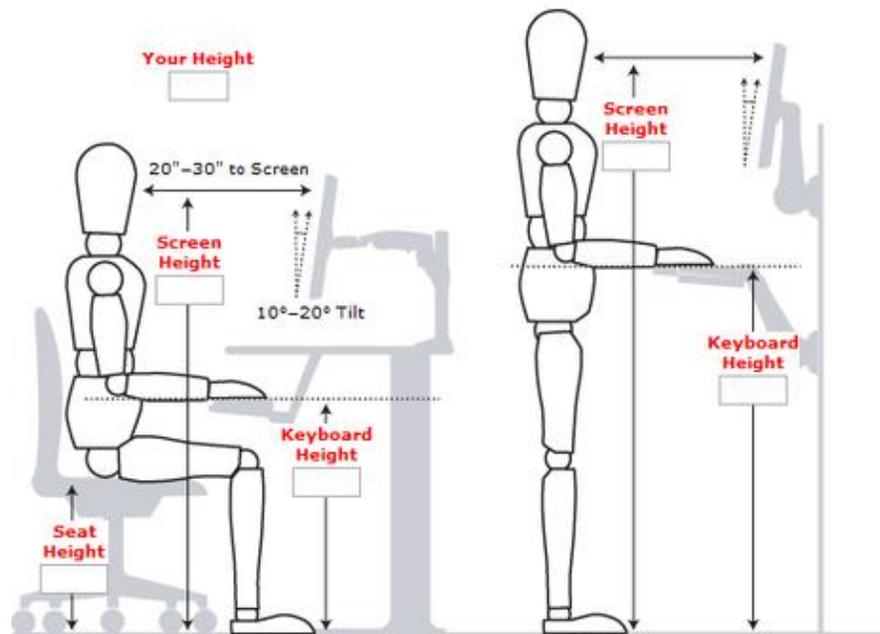
The International Ergonomics Association defines ergonomics as “the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance.”

Stated simply, ergonomics entails designing the workplace and the job to fit the person.

What you can do to minimize joint and muscle pain at work

First, and most important, is to take a 30-second break every 30 minutes – just to move a little and stretch, as well as look away from your screen if you’re working at a computer. Other tips:

- Avoid sitting hunched forward with shoulders rounded, which leads to muscle strain
- Take a few deep breaths periodically and lean back in your chair to relax your back
- Use proper lifting technique when moving any heavy object; avoid twisting while carrying
- Review the illustration on the next page, and adjust your workstation as needed



Important workstation factors

Every piece of equipment you use should be in a position that is right for your height and help you maintain good posture while working:

- Monitor – you should be looking directly forward without tilting chin down
 - If you use two monitors, your keyboard should be at the center to reduce neck and eye strain
- Keyboard – should be flat and not tilted up in back; wrists should be straight
- Chair – your knees should be at a 90° angle with feet flat on the floor
 - The chair back should support your spine – middle and low back
 - Arm rests low enough to enable you to type with elbows below shoulders
 - The backs of your knees should not compress against the front of the chair
- Desktop – aligned with your chair to enable you to sit up straight
- Desks are often the least adjustable, so align all other equipment around desk height
- Light – poor lighting contributes to eyestrain and fatigue; reduce glare as much as possible
 - Try to get natural light during the stay; even stepping outdoors briefly can help
- Air quality – indoor air can be stale, which also contributes to fatigue
- Avoid working with a closed door all day – and step outside to get some fresh air each day!

What you do during your workday affects what you do outside of the workplace.

Let's minimize risk of injury and reduce pain by simple workstation and habit changes. We can collaborate to create and maintain a healthier and safer workplace, where we can enjoy peak performance and thrive!

For additional information on ergonomics and other health-related topics, please contact Lisa Elsinger, Wellness Program Manager: ext. 7234 or lelsinge@broward.edu.