NOVA SCOTIA
Labour and Workforce Development
Occupational Health and Safety

Ergonomics Fact Sheet

Adjusting Your Computer Workstation

Computer users can feel stiff or sore if furniture and equipment components are not positioned properly to 'fit' the user and his/her work tasks. Having appropriate furniture and equipment is the first step, but adjusting it correctly for the tasks being performed is equally important!

Use the following guidelines to help tailor a computer workstation to fit the user.

Chair Height

Body Position... While seated, the thighs should be roughly parallel to the floor and feet should be in full contact with the floor.

Adjustment... Raise or lower seat height to achieve this positioning.

The Back Rest

Body Position... For keying and writing tasks the torso should be erect with the head supported over the shoulders. Ensure the low back (lumbar area) is supported by the backrest.

Adjustment... 1. Raise (or lower) the backrest so the backrest's lumbar support fits into the small of the back (roughly waist or belt height).
2. Using the lever dedicated for adjusting backrest angle, position the backrest so the upper body is sitting erect.

TIP!
Ensure the backrest is not pushed down into the back of the seatpan...a common mistake!
Take a moment to raise your backrest, if required.

The Keyboard and Arm Positioning

Body Position... While seated, shoulders should be relaxed with upper arms hanging loosely by sides. With elbows bent at roughly a right angle, the forearms, wrists and hands should form a straight line to the keys. Avoid bent wrists!
If not in this position while keying, one or more of the following adjustments should be made.

Adjustments... 1. To achieve a relaxed shoulder/arm position, raise or lower the keyboard tray, if it is adjustable. Alternatively, adjust chair height (note that a footrest may now be required if full foot-floor contact cannot be made).
. 2. The keyboard tray should be flat, not tilted towards you.
3. Similarly, the feet on the back underside of the keyboard should not be raised.
4. Move close enough to the keys to avoid reaching forward to them.
5. Use armrests on the chair for arm support, and/or drop hands into the lap during brief work pauses.

TIP!
Avoid using a wrist rest if it interferes with free hand movement over the keys or otherwise prevents you from achieving healthy arm/wrist positioning.

Using a Mouse

Body Position... Aim for the same arm and wrist alignment as above!

Adjustment... Place the mouse as close to the side of the keyboard as possible...the left side is best (right-handers...it doesn't take long to learn to mouse with the left hand!). It may help to raise the mouse about an inch to further improve arm/wrist positioning.

TIP!
A 'mouse deck', placed over the number keypad, is an inexpensive way to achieve ideal arm positioning for heavy mouse users!

Viewing the Monitor

Body Position... The head is balanced over the shoulders, and the chin is tucked in. The head and eyes are directed forward. The eyes are relaxed and not squinting.

Adjustment...
1. Position the monitor such that the top of the screen is, at maximum, level with seated eye height. Typically, this means placing the monitor on the worksurface, and not on top of a hard-drive.
2. Move the monitor as far back as possible, ensuring that screen contents can be comfortably read without straining.
3. Tilt the screen away from you to improve the viewing angle. Your chin should be tucked in, with your neck long.
4. Adjust brightness and contrast controls to maximize viewing comfort.

TIP!
Wearers of bifocal glasses have special viewing needs. Ensure the monitor is as low as possible and experiment with viewing distance.
Advise your optometrist of your need to work at a computer... sometimes a special pair of dedicated computer glasses is the best solution to avoiding a sore neck.

Source Documents

Body Position... Aim for the same head and eyes positioning as above... head up and looking as close to forward as possible.

Adjustment...
1. Position source materials directly in front of the user, or as close to this as possible... between the monitor and keyboard is best.
2. Materials should be tilted up towards the user to improve neck and viewing angles. Achieve this by using a document stand, desk wedge.

Spend a few moments to analyze body positioning, with reference to the descriptions above. To improve comfort, learn how to adjust furniture and components and then experiment with positioning. It really can make a difference!