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SECTION F

# REAL LIFE

## BODY & HEALTH

THIS WEEK  
 IN  
 REAL LIFE

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 New procedure offers breath  
 of fresh air for asthmatics  
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**COMING FRIDAY**  
 Why the big stink?  
 We sniff out attitudes  
 toward public smells

EDITOR: VALERIE BERENYI 235-7571 Fax: 235-7379

WWW.CALGARYHERALD.COM

THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2007

### VITALS



Courtesy, Dairy Farmers of Canada,  
 Canadian Press

#### Power-Packed Sloppy Joes

**RECIPE** • This protein-packed  
 dish is ideal for a busy weeknight  
 supper.

- 1 lb (500 g) lean ground beef
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) chili powder
- 2 cups (500 mL) milk
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) tomato paste
- 1 cup (250 mL) tomato sauce
- 1 sweet red or green pepper, finely chopped
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt (or to taste)
- 4 whole wheat hamburger buns, split and toasted

In a large skillet, brown beef, garlic, carrots and chili powder over medium-high heat, breaking up beef with a spoon; drain off any fat.

Stir in milk and bring to a boil; reduce heat and boil gently, stirring occasionally, until about half of the liquid is absorbed.

Stir in tomato paste, then pasta sauce and red pepper; simmer for about 5 minutes or until thick. Stir in salt to taste. Spoon over toasted hamburger buns.

Makes 4 servings.  
 —The Canadian Press

#### Terrified of tap water?

**NEW PRODUCT** • Those who are terrified of tap water can now filter much more water, more quickly, with the Clear20 Water Filtration System.

We haven't tried it, but the manufacturer says this gadget re-

# Blueprint for a HEALTHY WORKSTATION

Pull up a chair and draft a plan  
 for a better desk design



**MICHELLE  
 MAGNAN**

CALGARY HERALD

**A**s I sit and type this story, my elbows are hanging by my side. That's not good.

According to Shona Anderson, a certified Canadian professional ergonomist and

owner of Calgary-based Anderson Ergonomics Consulting Inc., hanging elbows cause more muscle fatigue. I should have my arms resting on my armrests, but the rests are too wide.

No wonder I have sore shoulders at the end of the day.

If you're like me, you need to do some rearranging to achieve a healthy workspace. Believe it or not, desk jobs can be exhausting, even though you're sitting on your fanny all day. Tiny, repetitive movements really add up over the course of a day, week and year, sometimes with debilitating results. Carpal tunnel syndrome, headaches and back problems are some of the injuries that can arise.

"If you're not set up properly, it causes a lot of muscle tension in various parts of the body," says Anderson.

Considering we spend a significant amount of time at our desks, it's crucial to have a good setup. "People get pain if they're not set up properly," she says, noting that the pain usually starts in the shoulders and upper back.

To help you get the ideal workspace, here are Anderson's ergonomic tips, labelled one to eight. Start with No. 1—the chair—and work your way out from there.

"The chair is really critical in the workstation," she says. "It's the most important thing."

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Today, in our series on health on the job, we focus on setting up a proper workspace.

- Monday: Employee fitness
- Tuesday: The healthy CEO
- Wednesday: Better dining out
- Thursday: Anatomy of a healthy cubicle
- Friday: Small steps add up

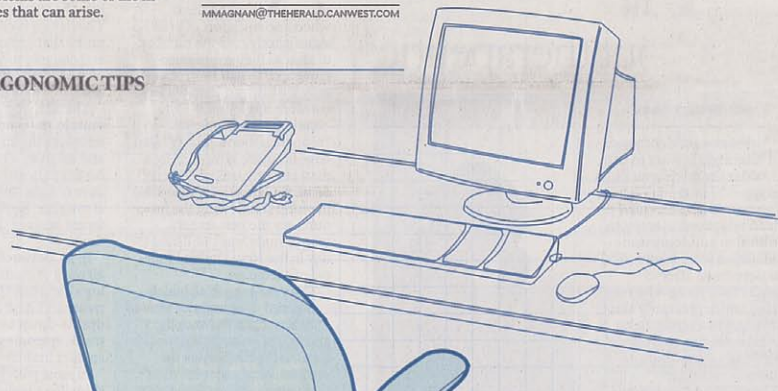
#### ERGONOMIC TIPS

**1** Plant your feet on the floor, with your knees and hips bent at about 90 degrees. You should feel your weight through your sitting bone, not through your thighs.

Adjust the outward curve in the chair's back to fit the small of your back. Your lower back should curve around it and your shoulder blades should come back and touch the chair.

Anderson says people often don't touch their shoulder blades to the back of the chair, but it's important.

"That helps to ease muscle contractions in the upper back and neck."



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moves 43 more "contaminants" and holds 50 per cent more filtered water than its leading competitor.

The suggested retail price for the pitcher is between \$30 and \$40; replacement cartridges are \$10 each or \$25 for a three-pack. Available at Canadian Tire.  
 — CanWest News Service

### Healthy food for Fido

**PETS** • If the recent pet food recall has you thinking about making your own dog food, you may want to try this recipe from The Good Food Cookbook for Dogs by Donna Twichell Roberts (Quarry Books).

#### Meatloaf

- 3/4 cup (175 mL) water
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 rib celery, diced
- 1 1/2 lb (750 g) meatloaf mix (see Cook's Note)
- 1 cup (250 mL) old-fashioned oatmeal
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) ketchup

Bring water to boil. Add carrot and celery. Reduce heat to medium and cook 5 minutes. Drain and cool.

Place all ingredients in a large bowl and mix thoroughly to combine. Place meatloaf on foil-lined baking sheet. Form into a bone shape measuring approximately 9 inches (23 cm) long by 5 inches (13 cm) wide by 1 1/2 inches (4 cm) high. Bake at 350° F (180°C) about 1 hour.

Remove from oven and let cool about 10 minutes before serving. Makes 1 meatloaf.

**Cook's Note:** A combination of ground beef, pork and veal (or chicken or turkey).

— Newsday

**2** Make sure you have a space between the back of your knee and the front edge of the seat. You should be able to fit three to four fingers of space between them. Some chairs will allow you to adjust the seat depth.

"If there isn't that space, then people tend to sit forward on their chair. They perch." If you have strong core muscles and can maintain good posture while perching, it may not be a problem. But most people can hold themselves straight for only 10 minutes. When you perch, she adds, you end up in a slouching position and that puts pressure on the discs and the muscles in your back.

**3** With your elbows bent at about 90 degrees and resting close to your hips, set up your armrests to support at that height — no higher. "You don't want to have to use your shoulder to raise your arm to reach the rest," Anderson says. "Most armrests are too high, and people tend to have these really tight shoulders."

Let the armrests support your arms so you don't have to.

**6** Keep your phone on the opposite side of your dominant hand. As a right-handed person, you want it on the left side so you can pick up with your left, leaving your dominant hand free to type or write. You'll avoid the crossing-over motion this way, a repetitive movement that can cause muscle strain.

**4** Now roll into your workstation with your elbows bent and your wrists straight. The keyboard should fall right underneath your fingers. Most often, office desks are too high. If that's the case, you can either lower the keyboard onto a tray or raise your chair.

"But if you raise your chair, you need to mimic the floor with some good support under your feet." A foot rest will do the trick.

**7** Place your document holder between your keyboard and your monitor. You may need to replace your vertical holder, as there are shorter, horizontal holders available that are designed to fit the space. It will save your neck a lot of work.

"The eyes are capable of looking down and up, but they can't look sideways, so you have to turn your head," says Anderson.



**5** The top of your monitor screen should be parallel to your eye height, whether you wear glasses or not.

Bifocal-wearing workers are the exception; because they tend to look through the bottom of their lenses, their monitors should be lower.

Your monitor should be far enough away that with your arm extended, your fingers just touch the screen. "If you can push it back and still see it comfortably, that's better for your eyes," she says. The closer the monitor is to your eyes, the more strain they're under.

**8** Palm rests are optional. Anderson says they can be good in front of a keyboard, as long as you put the fleshy part of your palm on the rest and not the entire wrist.

"Without (a palm rest), people often drop their wrists down to the desk surface," causing the wrists to bend backwards. She doesn't recommend using a palm rest in front of a mouse because most people don't have long enough forearms to extend over an armrest, the palm rest and the mouse.

### Other tips for a healthy workstation:

■ Lighting should be as natural as possible. "You have to avoid the glare as much as possible," says Anderson. She says people will sometimes take out a row of bulbs from overhead lights to reduce the glare. The ideal is to use a task light and shine it away from you so that it becomes indirect light.

■ Get out of your chair at least once an hour. "It allows the muscles to stretch, allows blood flow to get to the muscles so they can re-energize themselves and it changes your posture," she says. "If you're creeping in and slouching, stand up and sit back down again. You're likely to lean back in your chair and sit properly. You'll break the bad habit."

■ Don't bend your neck to cradle your phone receiver between your head and shoulder. Instead, buy and use a headset. You'll avoid the neck strain, and it will free up your hands to type or write.

