



Ergonomics Advisor

Starting the New Year Right

Start the New Year right by setting up your workstation correctly, maintaining good posture at the computer, taking regular breaks, and becoming more physically active. You'll feel less stressed, healthier and more comfortable in the year ahead.

Anderson Ergonomics Consulting is committed to helping companies improve the health, safety and productivity of all their employees.

Your workstation

Although a comprehensive assessment of your office work area is ideal, the diagram on this page will help you set up your workstation or modify it so it's more comfortable.

Since we spend so much of our day sitting, the most important thing to ensure is that your chair is well adjusted for you. A good chair can cost anywhere from \$400 to \$1200, but, as **Shona Anderson, President of**

Anderson Ergonomics Consulting, points out, "No matter what the price, if you don't adjust the chair and use it properly, it is likely to contribute to discomfort."

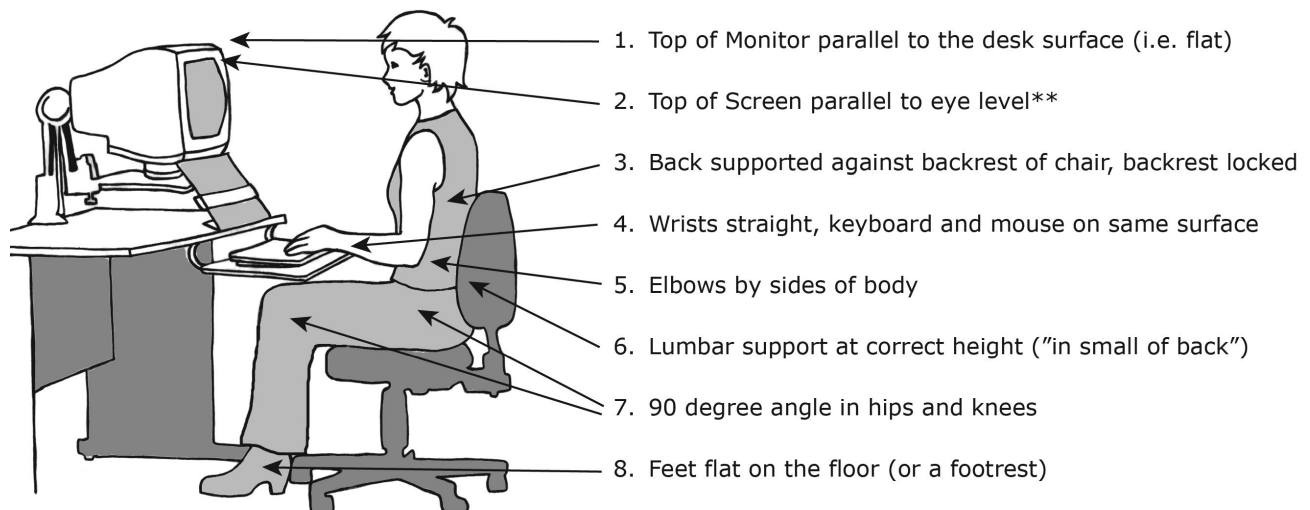
Good posture

In addition to comfort, a well-adjusted chair will provide support for you to maintain a "neutral" spine as long as you sit back in it. A neutral spine is the foundation for good posture. Poor posture contributes to

back and shoulder pain as well as muscle fatigue, so be conscious of your posture at all times.

Follow these important tips:

- **DON'T PERCH!** Sit back, relax your muscles and allow your chair to do its job.
- Press your shoulder blades against the back of your chair.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor or footrest.
- Position the lumbar support in your chair at your waistline. If



This illustration explains key points to keep in mind when setting up your office workstation.

your chair doesn't have enough support, add an external lumbar support or a rolled-up towel behind you.

- Keep your chin level; ears in line with your shoulders.
- Lift your breastbone and feel your ribs lift when you breathe.

Good posture opens up the chest area and allows you to breath from the diaphragm (more oxygen) rather than in shallow breaths.

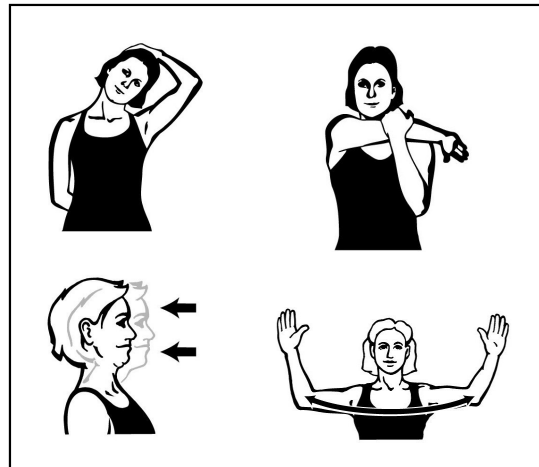
Eliminate clutter under your desk so you can sit with your knees facing forward and move freely within your work space.

Regular breaks

Employees who sit for long periods are at greater risk of developing lower-back pain, which affects up to 90 per cent of us at some time in our lives.

Taking regularly scheduled breaks allows you to change positions, reducing the risk of back and other computer-related problems, and increases concentration as well.

For every hour you spend at the computer, try



Here are four recommended stretches for relaxing tense, sore neck and shoulder muscles.

standing up for a 5 min work break by switching to a task that allows you to change positions.

Shona Anderson suggests these ways to build standing and moving into your day:

- Drink lots of water.
- Stand when the phone rings.
- Put your printer outside of your office.
- Do filing and photocopying regularly throughout the day.
- Walk to someone's office rather than sending an email.

Stretching

Anderson Ergonomics Consulting can recommend a series of exercises that will increase circulation and reduce stiffness and discomfort

caused by prolonged sitting or other forms of stress. (If you'd like a stretching guide sent to you, log onto our website)

Always stretch slowly, without bouncing or straining, and stop if you experience discomfort.

Exercise

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to exercise regularly.

Participating in a good fitness program, which includes stretching, aerobic activity and core strengthening exercises, reduces a person's risk of back pain and back injuries. Other benefits include having more energy and sleeping better. Consult your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

Tips for Starting Right

1. Set up workstation to maintain good posture
2. Breathe from diaphragm
3. Eliminate clutter
4. Take breaks
5. Change positions regularly
6. Drink lots of water
7. Stand when phone rings
8. Move printer outside office
9. Space filing and photocopying throughout day
10. Walk to someone's office rather than sending email
11. Stretch frequently
12. Exercise regularly

Anderson Ergonomics Consulting offers assessments where a professional Ergonomist will work with you to assess your workstation and your posture, and then make suggestions for improvements. Also available are seminars that teach employees how to avoid back and repetitive strain injuries.

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