

Working in Comfort

How to be Ergonomically Comfortable at Your Workstation*

Like other government departments, we are seeing an increase in the number of employees complaining of the aches and pains associated with continual computer use. To address these health concerns, we have put together a three-part series of articles on office ergonomics. We begin by looking at the principles of ergonomics — how people interact with their environment — and then apply them to your workstation to ensure that you perform your job as efficiently and comfortably as possible.

Concentration starting to lag? Tired eyes? Stiff neck, tight shoulders and aching back? In the next issue of the *Newsletter*, we will show you some easy exercises to relax muscles and reduce stress so that you stay comfortable at your computer. In March, we will discuss everyday aches and pains, Cumulative Trauma Disorders or Repetitive Motion Injuries (e.g., tendonitis and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome) and how to prevent them.

What is ergonomics?

er.go.nom.ics n. the study of the mental and physical capacities of persons in relation to the demands made upon them by various kinds of work.

Ergonomics is also an approach, a way of looking at work situations and a way of thinking about the people who work. The basic assumption of ergonomics is that the selection of objects intended for human use should be based upon human characteristics and capabilities. For example, the furniture and

equipment you use should fit your characteristics and there should be room for you to place often needed materials within easy reach. Implementing ergonomics in the workplace is recognized as one of the best ways to minimize on-the-job stress and strain and prevent Repetitive Motion Injuries.

Let's look at what makes an ergonomically suitable — or comfortable — workstation.

The Workstation

Just as some workers need protective gear, special tools and equipment to do their jobs, you need a workstation that is designed according to your individual characteristics and the type of job you perform. Your workstation should, therefore, consist of all the equipment you need to perform your job. This includes a desk, swivel chair, a computer with a detachable

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