

Ergonomics Is The Key

Stacy Terebayza, PTA
Physical Therapist Assistant
Andover Physical Therapy

Are you sitting at a desk or staring at a computer the majority of the day? Do you have a repetitive, demanding job? Changing or altering your work environment may be the key to prevent future injuries.

Ergonomics is the study of work and how to use your body most efficiently when at work. The focus is to increase effectiveness and provide a safer work environment. Proper ergonomics not only provides benefits to the work itself but also the physical and emotional aspects of the individual.

Since many people sit motionless at a desk for eight hours a day, here are some general rules for sitting at a desk or computer:

- View the monitor by looking straight ahead with proper posture, which means avoiding having to look up or down at the screen.
- Avoid cradling the phone between your neck and shoulder which could cause eventual pain and discomfort. Get a head set.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and place the keyboard and mouse in area where you can reach them with your arms relaxed at side.
- Take scheduled breaks and alternate positions throughout the day to avoid a potential decrease in circulation (“Ah! My foot fell asleep!”).
- Sit all the way back in your chair with feet supported either on the floor or with a foot rest. You may need a lumbar cushion for support.

Along with these simple guidelines, here are a few stretches that can prevent possible work discomfort: (hold each stretch for five seconds and repeat five times).

- Sitting up straight, lower your ear to your shoulder and repeat on the other side.
- Turn your head to the left and to the right.
- Lower your chin to your chest.
- Roll your shoulder backwards in a circular motion.
- Rotate your wrists in a circular motion in both directions.
- Make a fist and then open with your fingers spread apart.
- Bend your wrists with your fingers pointing to the ceiling and then bend your wrists with your fingers pointing to the floor.
- Clasp your hands behind head and press your elbows back while squeezing shoulder blades.
- While sitting, extend one leg out with your toes pointing to the ceiling and then repeat with other leg.
- Standing with your hands in small of your back, slowly bend backwards.

Remember...prevention is the key. Being aware of your work environment and listening to your body can help prevent harmful injuries. If you are interested in more work site analysis, contact your supervisor or if you have any questions contact Ham Lake Physical Therapy at (763) 413-0880.