

Ergonomic Tips

Raise your hand if you know what each knob of your office chair does? Keep it up if you know what position your body should be in while sitting, keyboarding, handwriting, or speaking on the phone? Have you ever really been taught how to lift that box at work, or lift laundry, children, and groceries at home? Do you know what specific stretch to do if you start getting a dull headache while working on your laptop?



Repetitive stress injuries (RSI's) per definition do not happen overnight. They are a series of innocent physical stresses that add up over time to cause fatigue, discomfort, pain, and for the very unfortunate, painful and life-altering injuries. The symptoms may be insidious as one may feel mental fatigue caused by tired and strained muscle groups then wrongly assign the cause to emotional work-related stress.

Most people that work at a computer don't realize that unfortunately, due to a lack of some simple training, their neck and shoulder muscles are unknowingly being asked to stay "flexed" most of the day. These muscles will inevitably rebel in the form of discomfort or pain that can, if long ignored, lead to a chronic headache or overall malaise.

PHYSICAL STRESS RELIEF TIPS

The best solution of course is to prevent the physical stress from occurring and accumulating on your body. This is really simple to learn. There are postures that your bodies like better than others.

Head Position - An average head weighs roughly 12 pounds. If you look down or put your head forward when looking at your computer your body needs to engage muscles to support it. Keep your head neutral (not down or up or extended as to be closer to the monitor) and your muscles can relax and thus help you feel better. Make sure your monitor is at a height that keeps your head from looking down or up while typing or reading.

Neck and Shoulders - Do not reach for your mouse or keyboard! This can lead to neck and shoulder discomfort. Your upper extremities weigh up to 15% of your body weight. Imagine walking around like Frankenstein with your arms straight out? Not only would you look weird, it would hurt in very fast order. When we keep our elbows by our sides while typing muscles do not have to work to support our arms.

You are in charge of how you feel. Adjust your mouse and keyboard so that your elbows may stay by your side. This little adjustment can make a world of difference.

When we share the responsibility for safety in the workplace, everyone wins!!