

What does your desktop workspace look like? Ergonomics 101 – Retraining your body

An ergonomic workspace is a critical component of preventing back pain, stress-headaches, and general stiffness. This is especially true if you spend the majority of your day seated working on a computer. Follow these simple steps to help get your work safe as ergonomic as possible.



- 1. Sitting up straight (we know this first step is the hardest).** Your spine should be in a tall, neutral line. Imagine a string coming from the top of your head that aligns your ears over shoulders over hips. Your natural curves should be maintained, and this may mean using a lumbar support pillow to maintain the curve of your lower back and prevent you from slumping into a curved posture (posterior pelvic tilt). Ideally, you should feel that your sit bones are well-grounded in your seat and you're able to sit tall without straining.
- 2. Head, Shoulder.. KNEES and toes!** Your knees should be slightly below your hips, with your feet firmly on the ground. If your knees are higher than your hips, you are more likely to strain your lower back and come into a slumped posture. If you are more petite, consider getting a bolster, block, or stack of bigger book (make sure they are stable) so that you are able to have your feet flat. If your feet are hanging in space, you are likely to compensate by overusing and straining your core and low back muscles.
- 3. Where are you resting your elbows?** Your elbows should be less than a 90 degree angle. 90-120 degrees is ideal. This means that your keyboard and mouse should be lower than your elbows. This may mean having them in an under-desk drawer that allows these electronics to be lower. Having your elbows at a higher angle puts additional stress on your wrist and elbow muscles as you type and click repeatedly.
- 4. Monitor Control.** The top of your monitor should be at eye level so that you are not tilting your head up or down to look at the screen. The monitor should be about an arms-length away from your face. Consider stacking your monitor on a block or some books if it is too low. If you have more than one monitor, ensure that your chair swivels so that your whole body can turn to look at each screen, rather than twisting through your neck throughout the day.
- 5. Get up and move!** Remember, changing positions throughout the day is important to avoid stiffness and repetitive stress, and also gives you a much-needed mental break! Put a post-it on your screen or set a timer on your phone or watch to remind you to get up every 20-30 minutes, complete some desk-stretches, and take a little break from sitting.