

Ergonomics Checklist / Guidelines for office work

1. Posture – Activity – Exercise

Sustained sitting is not healthy in general. Hence it is most important to get out of the chair and to change body posture whenever possible. A proper setup of chair, table and computer etc is however important as well.

- a) Include standing and walking activities into your routines. For example, put file cabinets a few meters away from your chair, so that you have to stand up and walk.
- b) Alternate between different postures on a regular basis. Set up parts of your table or meeting rooms for standing posture, if activities in standing posture will not take too long.
- c) Arrange chair and computers so that you can sit straight and have some space for moving. Avoid any twisted body posture, and provide enough leg room to change your leg position from time to time.
- d) Set up your table, chair and computer so that your lower arm are in a horizontal position and the top of the computer screen is about at eye height.
- e) Adjust your backrest so that it provides support, but allow yourself flexibility to readjust from time to time. Consult with us, if your chair cannot support your back properly.
- f) Keep a neutral position, where the forearms, wrists and hands are in a straight line and the upper arms are in a vertical direction.
- g) Avoid resting elbows, forearms or wrists on hard surfaces or sharp edges.
- h) Set up your chair so that there is no pressure under your thighs. Consult with us, if your chair cannot provide this.
- i) Take frequent mini-breaks throughout the day to give muscles and joints a chance to rest and recover.
- j) Give eyes a break by closing them momentarily, gazing at a distant object and blinking frequently.
- k) Proper exercises are a complement to a complete office ergonomics program. Consult with us to select appropriate exercises.

2. Lighting – Air – Noise

- a) Maintain appropriate light levels for specific tasks. More illumination is usually needed to read a document than a computer screen.
- b) If you regularly need artificial illumination at your workplace and you often feel dizzy after some hours of work, please consult with us for checking if other forms of illumination (other light tubes or desk lamps) could make you more comfortable.
- c) Reduce or eliminate glare by using window shades, if appropriate.

- d) Adjust the contrast and brightness on your computer screen to a comfortable level.
- e) Get a regular eye exam and if necessary, wear corrective lenses. Tell your eye specialist how often you use the computer.
- f) Clean the computer screen and other surfaces regularly.
- g) Maintain a comfortable temperature by using layers of clothing or a portable fan or heater.
- h) Be considerate to others working in the area and conduct meetings and conversations in appropriate areas.
- i) If deemed useful, ask your supervisor for fabric partitions to reduce noise from conversations, foot traffic and equipment, like copiers and printers.

3. Work Style – Organization – Breaks

- a) Reduce stress by planning ahead and setting realistic expectations for what you can accomplish during the workday. Communicate with your line manager or supervisor if you feel in a conflict with external expectations.
- b) Organize your workload to help even out busy and slow times, to avoid feeling “swamped”.
- c) Vary tasks to make the day more interesting. For example, deliver a message in person instead of phoning.
- d) Avoid long periods of repetitive activity. For example, alternate computer work with other tasks like phone calls, filing, copying and meetings.
- e) Acknowledge ideas and accomplishments of co-workers on a regular basis.
- f) Allow yourself mini-breaks that re-energize, invigorate and refresh.
- g) Personalize your office, if you like it, with a few favourite items, like artwork, photos and plants.

These guidelines were inspired by www.ergonomics.com.au/office-ergonomics-checklist and drawn up by Prof Matthias Göbel (Ergonomist@Rhodes).