



# TAKE FIVE for Safety- Office Ergonomics

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## Hazard of the Month: Make Your Workspace Less of a Pain in the Neck!

By Megan Magrum

Ergonomics is the science of designing workspaces, tools, and tasks to fit the worker – not the other way around. Its goal is to improve safety, efficiency, and comfort by aligning the work environment with how the human body naturally moves. And ergonomics applies to everyone – not just office workers.

### When your role is physically demanding

Many employees who perform physically demanding tasks, such as landscapers and maintenance crews, are especially vulnerable to strains and injuries without proper ergonomic practices. Awkward body positions, repetitive motions, frequent bending or twisting, prolonged standing, and lifting without proper support can lead to sore feet, swollen legs, lower back pain, neck stiffness, and muscle fatigue. If unaddressed, these issues can develop into chronic conditions that affect long-term mobility and quality of life.



# Set Up and Use of Your Office Workspace

- Ensure that your setup supports good posture and comfort.
- Use adjustable equipment such as chairs, keyboards, monitor stands, and desk height and other ergonomic tools (wrist/arm pads, back support) to increase comfort.
- Stand and stretch at regular intervals.
- Do not ignore symptoms of repetitive stress, such as muscle soreness and strain in the neck, shoulders, wrists, and lower back.
- Take breaks and adjust workstation if needed.

# OSHA Recommendations

Workers should be encouraged to do the following when using computers:

- Where possible, position computer workstations in corners or other areas away from doors, entrances and passageways.
- Place monitor so their viewing distance is between 18 and 30 inches.
- Place monitor so the top of the screen is approximately at eye level. This allows the eyes to gravitate naturally toward the center of the screen.
- Use a document holder placed adjacent to and in the same plane as the computer screen.
- Use footrests, where possible, in order to allow them to change leg positions throughout the day.
- Use an appropriate keyboard, mouse or other input devices if they have existing musculoskeletal problems.
- Take mini-breaks of 3 to 5 minutes for every 20- 30 minutes of keyboarding or mouse work.

# BNL Resources

- The [Ergonomic Computer Workstation Assessment Tool](#) can help you determine whether your station is properly arranged.
- SHSD designed the new Ergonomic Showroom in Bldg. 30 to teach staff about proper ergonomic workstation setup. It also lets staff try the latest adjustable workstation setups, chairs, and accessories that support a safe and comfortable working environment.
- To schedule a hands-on experience in the Ergonomic Showroom or a workstation assessment,
  - Contact the Lab's Ergonomics subject matter expert, Fred Horn ([horn@bnl.gov](mailto:horn@bnl.gov) or Ext. 3451) or Chris Goehle ([cgoehle@bnl.gov](mailto:cgoehle@bnl.gov) or Ext. 2568). Or
  - Stop by the showroom during open office hours on Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-noon, or Thursdays 1:30-3:30 p.m.

# Sample Results of Assessment Tool

Question	Response	Recommendation
<b>Do you adjust the height so that your keyboard is at your elbow level?</b>	No	Adjust your chair so that you can achieve a neutral position relative to the keyboard.
<b>Can you adjust your chair so your feet are flat on the floor when the keyboard is at elbow height?</b>	Yes	Adjust your chair so that you can achieve a neutral posture for your legs and feet.
<b>Are the armrests adjustable?</b>	No	To provide proper support, a computer workstation chair should have arm supports that are padded, contoured and adjustable.
<b>Monitor Position - Vertical:</b>	Below Eye Level	The monitor should be directly in front of you which places your neck in a neutral position and will not cause fatigue.
<b>After completing this assessment, do you feel that you have an ergonomically correct workstation?</b>	Yes	
<b>Do you think that you can improve your workstation ergonomics, on your own?</b>	N/A	
<b>Would you like to have an ergonomic evaluation from one of our ergonomic specialists?</b>	No	