Ergonomics in the Workplace

Office workers spend an average of 1,700 hours per year in front of the computer screen. That makes up over 70 days of sitting at a desk. Most people tend to position themselves in a way that makes them feel most comfortable. Failing to take ergonomic precautions when it comes to sitting for a long period of time can result in several musculoskeletal disorders that can seriously impact our health.

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) generally progress over a period of time, especially in those who tend to endure prolonged sitting positions or repetitive motions. Symptoms of MSDs include recurrent pain, stiff joints, shooting pains, swelling, dull aches and loss of strength. They can affect any major part of the musculoskeletal system, but most frequently affects the back, neck and shoulders. Lower back pain is the most common work-related disability.

**How to prevent the onset of MSDs** – Musculoskeletal disorders increase with age, but people of any age can experience them due to other conditions, like bad posture. Prevention can start in the office workplace environment with ergonomics.

**What is ergonomics?** – Ergonomics is designing and arranging furniture, products, systems and devices to fit the people that use them, thus minimizing the risk of injury or harm. Creating a comfortable, safe and productive workspace must take into consideration the person’s body size, height, strength, skill, speed, and sensory abilities (vision, hearing).

**Chair adjustments** – An employee should adjust their chair to a comfortable height with feet flat on the floor and knees at a 90° angle. They should sit so their back is all the way back in the seat pan of the chair, sit up straight in the seat, and be encouraged to take regular breaks away from the screen to walk around the office.

**Computer monitor, keyboard and mouse, and other accessories** – The computer screen should be adjusted so eyes are level or slightly higher than the top of the monitor and should be an arms-length away. The mouse should be comfortably within reach of the user, with the forearms, wrists and mouse parallel to the desk. The keyboard should be slightly tilted and at a comfortable distance. Any accessories should not require strained, repetitive or awkward postures or motions. This includes phones, headsets, staplers and calculators.

Remember, if you feel symptoms, say something!

Officer’s signature: 

![Correct and Incorrect Posture](image)