

Office Worker Ergonomics



Musculoskeletal disorders accounted for one-third of all injury or illness cases in the United States in 2011, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Among office clerks, receptionists and administrative support workers, 4,050 MSD cases – including carpal tunnel syndrome and injuries to the neck, shoulder and back – required a median range of 11 to 16 days away from work to recover.

The National Safety Council conducts routine ergonomics assessments of NSC office workstations – including those of remote workers. The following pictorial, featuring NSC employees, depicts an abbreviated ergonomics assessment that can be conducted at a typical office workstation. As with all aspects of ergonomics, no “one-size-fits-all” body position or arrangement of items exists – worker needs may differ from what is shown.

Chair adjustments

An employee should be shown how to adjust his or her chair, which initially should be adjusted to a position that is comfortable but does not strain the joints or muscles.



Keyboard and mouse

The computer keyboard and mouse should be comfortably within reach while allowing the forearms, hands and wrists to be roughly parallel to the floor at rest. Wrists in the neutral position should be supported by a wrist or palm support.



The keyboard should be at about the same height as the forearms and slightly tilted. Keyboard trays can be added to allow the employee to raise or lower the keyboard to his or her comfort level.

Monitor and documents

An employee should be able to easily adjust the height and location of the computer monitor, and reading materials should not require excessive neck movement to view.



Raise or lower the computer monitor so the top of the screen is at or slightly lower than eye level. Use a monitor riser if necessary to increase height.

Additional accessories

Equipment regularly used by the employee should not require awkward postures or repetitive forceful motions. Commonly used items should be placed within easy reach of the employee.



If an employee uses the phone for an average of one to two hours every day, provide a phone rest or headset.

A full assessment



This pictorial focuses on the chair and desk of an office workstation. A full ergonomics assessment also takes into account the following:

- Lighting
- Office temperature and humidity
- Noise
- Space for the worker to change position

Workers should be encouraged to report any workstation-related headaches, pain or discomfort to a supervisor.