People spend increased amounts of time at computer workstations. Due to the increased time spent at these workstations different disorders can arise. Risk factors include:

- Repetitive motion
- Prolonged awkward postures
- Excessive force
- Contact stress
- Personal Risk (stress, poor diet etc.)

These risk factors can lead to musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). Ergonomics in the workplace can reduce the potential for accidents and injury while increasing productivity and performance.

Why is ergonomics important?

Cheap solutions for ergonomic mismatch:

- Use a stack of books or paper to raise keyboard height or as a monitor riser
- Use books or empty boxes as a foot rest
- Adjust your chair!
- Reduce clutter and organize
- Lower computer feet
- Re arrange office furniture if possible
- Use a task light if you have one
- Take a rest break!

*it is always important to check with administration before making large changes in a work Environment

** One small change can effect other ergonomic aspects of your work environment!
Computer Workstation Tips

Chair Positioning
- Width: One inch on both sides of the seat cushion
- Depth: Room for 2-4 fingers between back of knee and edge of chair
- Use the backrest

Desktop
- Reduce clutter
- Keep frequently used items within arms reach

Computer
- Monitor directly in front of keyboard
- Monitor located an arms length away (18”-24”)
- Mouse in same plane as keyboard
- Eyes positioned at top 1/3 of screen

Workstation Body Mechanics
- Keep hands, wrists and forearms straight; parallel to the floor
- Elbows and knees roughly at 90 degrees
- Head should be in-line with torso
- Avoid twisting neck
- Keep shoulders relaxed
- Keep elbows close to body while typing, bent between 90-120 degrees
- Feet should be fully supported on floor or with use of footrest
- Back should be supported with appropriate lumbar support
- Thighs and hips should be supported by well padded seat
- Knees should be at about same height as the hips with feet slightly forward

Stretch Breaks
*Take a break periodically throughout the day and stretch

Here are some ideas for stretches you can do at your desk:
- Tilt your chin towards your neck and hold for 5 seconds. Release. Repeat 5 times.
- Turn your head towards your right shoulder. Hold for 5 seconds and release. Repeat on the other side. Repeat 5 times on each side.
- Clench your hands into a fist and hold for 5 seconds. Release, separating and fanning out your fingers until you feel a stretch. Hold for 5 seconds and release. Repeat the entire cycle 5 times.

*Adapted from OESH pamphlet
Lifting and Carrying Techniques

Assess
- How far will you have to carry the object?
- Is the space clear?
- Will you have to open doors?
- Could you carry the load in pieces?
- Avoid lifting overhead

Size up the load
- Test load by lifting corner
- Ask for help!
- Use push cart if possible
- Use gloves to improve grip
- Do not lift unless it is safe to do so!

Let your legs do the work!
- Firm footing with wide stance
- Center body over feet
- Bend the knees
- Keep back straight
- Hold load close to you
- Do not twist

When setting the load down..
- Avoid leaning over
- Squat
- Do not release grip until load is secure

Remember.. If you are tired, put the load down and take a rest!

Pushing and Pulling Techniques

- Always choose pushing over pulling when possible
- When pushing– hand and wrist height should be between the elbow and hip
- When pulling– hand and wrist should be between knee and hip level

- Lean slightly into weight load and push with the legs
- Keep your head up
- Stay close to the load
- Wear appropriate footwear

- Carrying
- Pushing
- Pulling

Fall Prevention

- Have eyesight checked annually
- Exercise!
- Know medication side effects, if any
- Avoid dark areas
- Wear appropriate shoes depending on weather and surface

- Be aware of surroundings
- Allow time, don't rush!
- Eliminate external distractions (phones, mp3 players, etc.)
- Limit number of objects being carried

- Wear appropriate clothing (avoid long pants that you could possibly trip over)
References & Resources


A Guide to Computer Workstation Setup Pamphlet-Office of Environmental Health and Safety, University of New Hampshire


www.osha.gov

www.britannica.com/

If you have any questions regarding ergonomics at UNH or would like to schedule a workstation evaluation please contact:

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