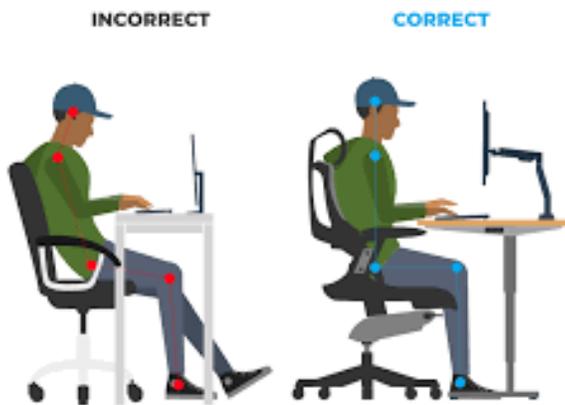


### Work Place Ergonomics

All employees perform various tasks while working at Northwestern. Either sitting at a desk or moving about in different ways. How you sit or move can help or hurt your productivity. Ergonomics is the process of designing or arranging workplaces so they fit the people who use them. Ergonomics looks to improve workspaces and environments to minimize risk of injury or harm. For example, adjusting a workstation so a person sits comfortably and correctly to reduce physical stresses that can lead to discomfort and possible injury. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics says that ergonomic injuries account for one out of every three missing workdays. Their research also claims that employees take more time off work -- a median of 11 days -- from injuries caused by ergonomic problems than other injuries or illnesses. Good workplace ergonomic practices reduce physical stress on the body and help prevent long-term injuries and disabilities, like chronic neck pain or carpal tunnel syndrome.



#### Office Ergonomics

Consider these tips for setting up your workstation:

##### 1. Chair and Posture:

- Use the backrest of the chair to provide full support to your lower back.
- Sit with your hips and knees at a 90-degree or greater angle.
- Change posture frequently. Common postures include upright sitting, reclined sitting, and standing.

##### 2. Computer Monitor Placement

- Place the monitor directly in front of you about an arm's length away.
- Position the top of the monitor screen at or below eye level.

##### 3. Keyboard and Mouse:

- Adjust the keyboard or chair height to keep forearms, wrists, and hands in a straight line.
- Place mouse and other input devices near to and at the same height as your keyboard.
- Practice using softer key strokes when typing and relax your grip on the mouse.

##### 4. Work Area and Lighting:

- Adjust the monitor screen or add an anti-glare filter.
- Add a task light to illuminate paper references.

##### 5. Take Frequent Breaks:

- Stretch periodically, consider stepping away from your work station for 10 minutes, once per hour.
- Step away from your computer or other devices to give your eyes a break from screens.
- Alternate work tasks and postures throughout the day

Learn more: Complete [Office Ergonomics](#) or [Industrial Ergonomics](#) training.

Report all injuries on the Risk Management [website](#) or 847.491.5084.

#### Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

**Preparation is Key:** Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review the various ways to improve ergonomics in your work place.

**Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

**Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

#### Safety at Home

If you work from home, proper ergonomic practices are just as important. You can use the acronym N.E.W. to help you remember good ergonomic practices.

- ✓ **Neutral Posture** - includes sitting with the neck straight, shoulders straight down loosely at the sides, elbows at a right angle, wrists straight, low back supported on the back rest of the chair, 90° at the hips, 90° at the knees, and feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- ✓ **Eye and elbow height** - Whether seated and standing – ensure that the keyboard and mouse are positioned at the elbow level. The top of the monitor should be at or slightly below eye height.
- ✓ **Work area** - Keep items that are used often in the primary work zone (the area when elbows are at the sides and the hands are moved side to side) keep items that are used less often in the secondary work zone (area within the outstretched arms).

#### For Additional Information

Contact Gwen Butler, Director, Environmental Health & Safety, at 847.491.4936.

Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Risk Management at [gwen.butler@northwestern.edu](mailto:gwen.butler@northwestern.edu) for details.