

Ergonomics: Using Your Computer

You know how your computer can help you do your job.

But have you ever thought about how it can hurt you?

Sometimes using a computer can lead to muscle strains, aches, and pains.

But how you use your computer and using the right tools with it can help to avoid these problems.

Let's start with your keyboard and mouse.

Using them correctly can make a difference, especially in how your arms, wrists, and hands feel.

It's best to be close enough to your keyboard and mouse that your shoulders can stay relaxed.

Your keyboard and mouse should be at a height that allows your elbows to be at about 90 degrees.

When you type, keep your wrists straight, with your hands a little higher than your wrists.

Your mouse is best close to the keyboard, so you don't have to lean forward or reach too far to get to it.

Some people use a touchpad or a trackball instead of a standard mouse.

They find that these devices are more comfortable to use than a standard mouse.

When you take a break from typing, a wrist pad gives you a place to keep your wrists straight and comfortable.

Rest the heels of your hands, not your wrists, on the pad.

If you have a keyboard tray, it should be big enough to hold your keyboard and your mouse, and you should be able to adjust the height. [Grunts] What if you're working from a printed document when you type?

A document holder lets you keep the paper at the same level as your computer monitor.

This way, your eyes don't need to refocus again and again as you look back and forth between the paper and the monitor.

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The same is true if you have more than one monitor ...

Keep them all at the same level to make things easier for your eyes.

Now, a lot of people work on the go ... at home, in the airport, at a coffee shop.

And they use a laptop. Here are a few hints for using this type of computer.

Make sure the keyboard is at elbow height.

Try to keep your wrists straight and your fingers slightly curved while you're working.

If possible, use an external mouse instead of the small touchpad or trackball that's on the laptop keyboard.

If you're sitting on a couch while working, you may need to use pillows under your elbows to support your arms.

And finally ... and this is for a desktop or a laptop ...

take a lot of 10- to 15-second breaks.

Look away from the monitor ... stand up ... stretch your arms.

Taking breaks may help reduce eyestrain and help relieve muscle tension.

So if you're looking for a way to help reduce office-related aches and pains, think about how you set up and use your computer.

Is there anything you can change?

You might be surprised how a few small changes can make a big difference in your comfort.