



# Ergonomics and Manual Tasks for Working from Home - Workers



TRAINING INSTITUTE

# Introduction

The learning objectives of the following presentation are to;

- Provide you with basic information on correct work practices and safe lifting
- Assist you to set up your workstation correctly to reduce the likelihood of injury at work

It contains:

- Common mechanisms of injury and warning symptoms
- General manual handling advice for safe lifting
- The principles associated with correct work station set up
- A diagrammatic representation of correct work station set up

***Setting up your work station correctly reduces your injury risk by allowing you to sit in the correct alignment for desk-based work.***

# Mechanisms of Injury

There are several different ways you can sustain an injury at work:

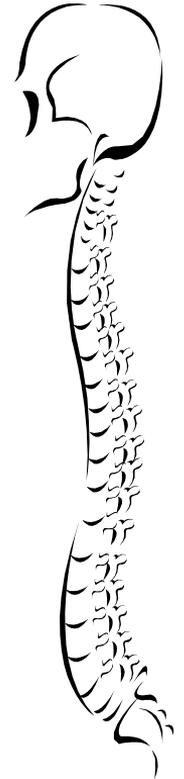
- *Traumatic injury*
- *Poor posture*
- *Static muscle loading*
- *Repetitive actions*
- *Excessive loading of muscles and joints*



# Mechanisms of Injury continued

- **Poor posture** causes stress to the muscles, joints and discs in the spine and to the soft tissues and joints in other parts of the body. Over time this can result in altered circulation, pinched nerves, referred pain, muscle spasm, stiffness, localized pain, and so on. The risk of sustaining an injury from tasks such as lifting, pushing, pulling and carrying is significantly increased if the task is performed in a poor postural position
- **Static muscle loading** occurs when a muscle is contracted but not regularly allowed to relax e.g. holding the arms and fingers in a constant position when using a computer keyboard. This results in muscle fatigue and alterations to circulation and is one of the chief causes of what used to be referred to as RSI.
- **Overly repetitive actions** also result in circulatory problems. The muscles fatigue and begin to break down because of the lack of blood flow. This can occur with very fast typing speeds.

- The word **posture** generally conjures up images of sitting up straight or standing up straight. In fact, what it means is **body position**. Body position, or posture, applies to the spine, and it also applies to all the other joints of the body as well.
- **Good Posture** means putting all joints into a natural or neutral position that is not going to place undue stress on any of the joints. Of particular importance to seated, office-based activities is the position of the spine, arms, hands and to a lesser extent legs.



# Posture continued

We can maximize correct posture by incorporating the following:

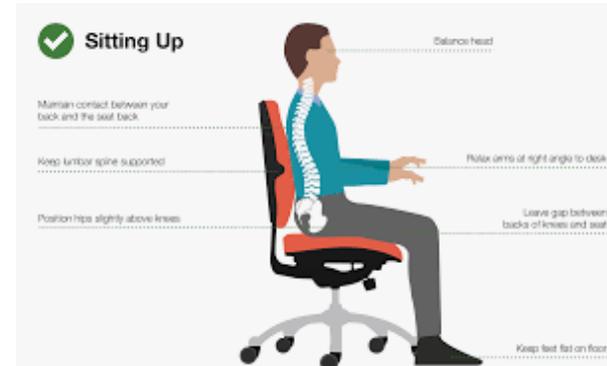
- When sitting, maintain the 3 postural curves



- Adjust your chair and workstation to allow for correct posture of the spine, arms and hands



- Keep moving



# Posture continued

Remember you should also consider your posture and MH techniques when undertaking other office tasks such as accessing files, moving boxes etc.

By using the principles of Manual handling and correct posture injuries can be avoided.

- Assess the load
- Stand with the feet apart for good balance
- Use your legs more than your back
- Maintain a neutral spinal posture
- Brace your core muscles
- Keep arms close to the body with elbows bent
- Point your feet in the direction to walk - Avoid twisting of the spine
- Reverse your posture regularly



# Posture and Movement

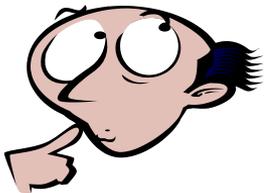
Moving on a regular basis helps prevent fatigue and discomfort.

- Do stretches
- Drink plenty of water and you will need to get up and move regularly!
- Go for a walk at lunch time
- Stand up for a few seconds during long phone calls



# Bad Habits

- We are creatures of habit - we do things in a certain way because we have always done them that way.
- When was the last time you adjusted your chair, or rearranged the items on your desk?
- Do you even know how to adjust your chair?



# Personalise your Work Station

## ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL.

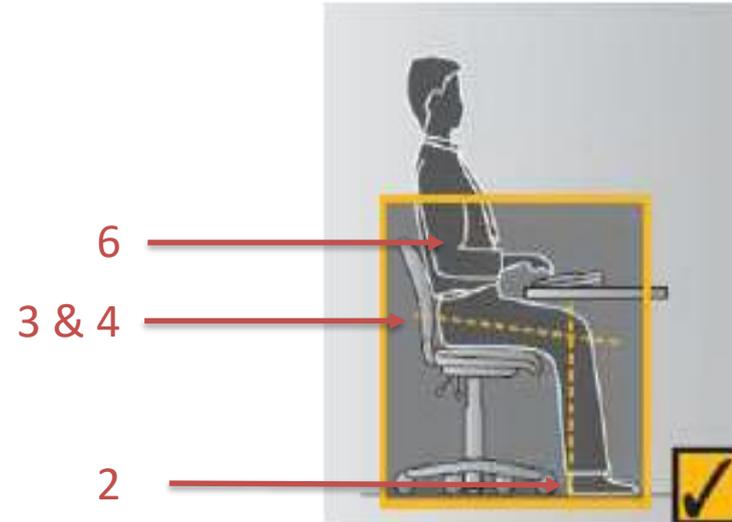
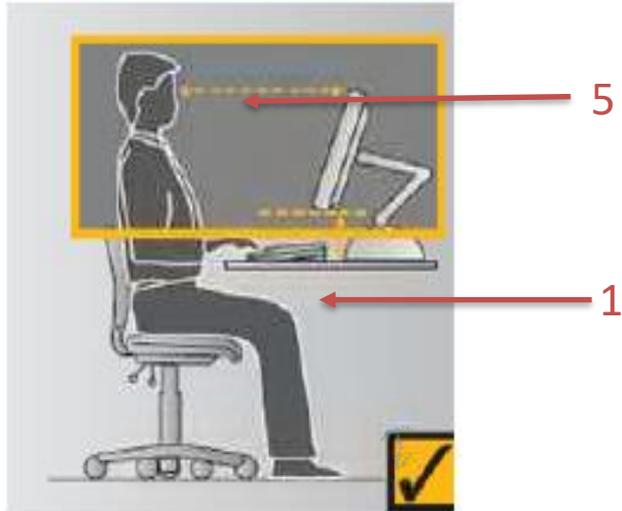
- Office chairs are now designed with considerable adjustability because we are all different in size.
- If the chair is not adjusted to suit your body then it cannot result in you having good posture!
- Correct work station set up (chair, desk and other equipment), and work design, will reduce the likelihood of symptoms occurring.



**Listen to your body.**

- Fatigue, stiffness, discomfort, pain, headache and numbness are all warnings by your body that your work station is not correctly adjusted for you.

# Correct work station set up



5	Screen height	Top of screen level with nose, use books, boxes to raise the height of the screen
5	Screen distance	Set at a distance comfortable for you
1	Chair height	Small space between thigh and underside of desk, and thigh and chair

6	Elbow position	Positioned at 90degrees
3	Backrest	Adjust backrest so lumpiest part of the back of the chair is in the hollow of your lower back. If you are using a stationary chair, place a small pillow or cushion on your lower back.
4	Backrest angle	Where possible. when using computer adjust backrest so it sits just back of vertical
2	Footstool	Use if feet don't touch floor once chair height adjusted

# Correct Work Station Set Up Continued



This following slide shows a graphical representation of where items should ideally be placed on your desk.

- Those items that you use frequently should be set within the Primary Working Zone, a 90-degree radius and half an arm's reach of your body. Items used less frequently should be within a full arm's reach, within the Secondary Working Zone
- Both the mouse and the keyboard should be set close to the front edge of the desk in the Primary working zone
- The mouse should be immediately adjacent to the keyboard. If you feel up for it, you can vary the location of the mouse from the right to the left of the keyboard and vice versa. It can take a bit of getting used to, but it is worth the effort to become an ambidextrous mouser.
- The phone handset should never be cradled between the shoulder and neck. If you need to speak on the phone at the same time as you operate the computer, then a headset should be used.
- You should sit with your tummy almost touching the desk when you are using the computer

# Common Warning Symptoms

- Warning symptoms occur when a problem is developing as a consequence of poor work station set up and task design.
- These can involve the tendons and muscles of the fingers, hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders, back and neck. Symptoms vary, depending on the individual, the site of injury and the severity of the condition, but common symptoms may include:
  - Pain or burning
  - Muscle weakness
  - Swelling
  - Numbness
  - Restricted mobility of the joint
- Should you experience any of these please notify the Safety, Health and Wellness Team who can assist you in problem solving to rectify the symptoms.

# A WORD ABOUT STANDING DESKS

Recent studies, as well as anecdotal evidence suggests that Standing Desks are not the panacea of all office ergonomic woes that they were once touted to be.

In most situations, a worker with an appropriately adjusted office chair, with the worker taking sensible steps to reduce the amount of sitting and taking regular breaks will not need a standing desk.

