# Office Workstation Safety

Presented by Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc.

## The Impact of Office Workstation Injuries

- Computers have become an essential tool in nearly every office
- Nearly everyone has a computer at home too
- Operating the computer for prolonged periods of time has the potential for causing pain and discomfort

*It is important to protect yourself from discomfort by being aware of the exposures associated with workstations.*

## Organizing Your Materials

- Place frequently used items such as the telephone, staplers, paperclips and pens within the natural reach zone.

- Overstretching every day to reach your materials can result in chronic injuries like lower back pain or strained arms and shoulders.

## Organizing Your Materials

**14-18"**

## Organizing Your Materials

- When working on paperwork, put as much material in front of you as possible.

- This minimizes the need for you to twist or turn while sitting.

*Twisting and turning at your desk to reach material is as harmful as overstretching and puts your body in danger.*

## Organizing Your Materials

- Excessive clutter under foot like boxes or equipment constricts the position of your legs and feet

- Restricting your freedom of movement

*Clear your floor area of any material that might force you to place your feet in an awkward position.*
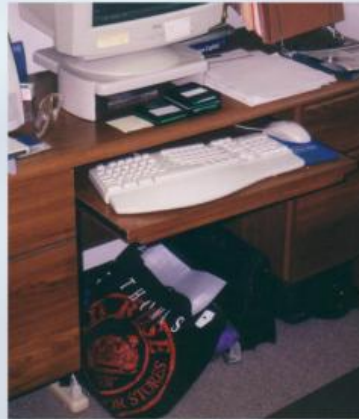
## Neutral Body Positions

- Maintaining a neutral body position is crucial to relieving muscle tension and avoiding cumulative trauma injuries.

- Neutral body positions are achieved by keeping the body in stress-free postures.

- This means minimizing bending the wrists, legs, neck and back.

## Adjusting Your Chair

## Positioning the Keyboard



## Using the Keyboard

- Remember to keep your wrists flat, not bent.
- This is an important position to maintain for preventing strain injuries.
- While you may not immediately notice pain from typing with bent wrists, the potential for injury is there.

## Using the Keyboard

- Wrist rests are support devices with rounded edges and a comfortable cushion.
- Place the wrist rest at the front side of the keyboard.
- A rolled-up towel will work just as well if no other support is available.

## Correct Posture

- When sitting, keep your back straight and your lower back, or lumbar region, fully supported.

- This posture helps maintain the natural forward curve of the spine and relieves the pressure that is created on the spinal discs.

- If you need help maintaining this posture, use a lumbar cushion, pillow or even a towel to keep your back straight.

## Adjusting the Computer Monitor

- The next step is to adjust your computer monitor.

- Place the monitor 20-40 inches away from your eyes and position it so that your eyes look down at a 15 to 20 degree angle.

20 to 40 inches

15 - 20 degrees

## Working Correctly with Documents

- Keep documents at the same distance and height as your monitor screen and as close to the screen as possible.

- If you spend a lot of time inputting data from hard copy into your computer, consider using a document holder.

- Keep the document holder on the side of the computer corresponding to your dominant eye.

**Document Holder & Screen**

**In-line Document Holder**

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- Too much or too little light in your work area can lead to vision problems.

- Be sure that you have enough light to see what you are doing.

- If the overhead lighting is not adequate, a desk lamp may be a good solution to providing extra lighting in your workspace.

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- Eyestrain has long been associated with computer work.

- Poor lighting levels and glare make the eyes work harder to focus.

- Dry eyes and uncorrected vision also make focusing more difficult.

- Symptoms of eyestrain include:
  - Red, irritated eyes
  - Fatigue
  - Headaches

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- Proper lighting in your workstation is one of the best defenses against eyestrain.

- Check the overall lighting levels in your workstation and make sure they are evenly distributed.

- Lighting that is distributed unevenly forces the eyes to continually refocus, causing fatigue.

- Be sure to report any defective or burned out lamps as soon as possible.

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- If your workstation is near a window, position the computer monitor at right angles to the windows to minimize the effect of outside light.

- Adjust window blinds or shades as necessary and remember to fine-tune them as the outside light shifts throughout the day.

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- Light sources that are too strong can cause another problem—glare.

- Glare on a computer workstation causes the eyes to overwork because they are trying to filter out excess light.

- Localized glare comes from windows or reflective surfaces that form a single point of light on the monitor screen.



## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- To cut down on the glare at your computer, reduce the general lighting level.

- Move the monitor or tilt it.

- If the glare persists and you can't find what's causing it, place a small mirror over the glare spot on the screen and it will reflect back to the source of the light.

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- Another way to combat glare is to place a glare filter over your computer monitor screen.

- You can also reduce glare by cleaning your monitor on a regular basis.

## Computer Work and Eyestrain

- Another work environment factor that can affect your vision is dry eyes.

- When your eyes are dry, your ability to focus is reduced.

- Your eyes can easily dry out when you work at a computer because we blink about half the normal rate when staring steadily at one spot.

- To counteract this problem, make a conscious effort to blink more frequently.

- If your eyes continue to feel dry, use artificial wetting solutions such as saline drops.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Injury prevention is your responsibility.

- Exercise can be the best protection against injury at work.

- Take mini-breaks occasionally to stretch your muscles.

## Stretching and Exercise

- A computer continually works the muscles of the hands and wrists, so you need to stretch them from time to time to stay limber.

- Every so often, stop what you're doing, clench your fist tightly, and then release it while fanning out your fingers.
  - Repeat this five times for each hand.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Next, grasp your fingers and gently bend back your wrist. Hold this position for five seconds.
    - Repeat the exercise with the other hand.



## Stretching and Exercise

- Muscle strength can also affect your neck.

- Loosen tired muscles by turning your head slowly from one side to the other.  Hold each turn for three seconds.
    - Repeat the cycle five to ten times

## Stretching and Exercise

- Moving your mouse is a small motion, but believe it or not, it can cause fatigue in your upper back and shoulder muscles.

- Stretch this muscle group by holding your elbows at a 90-degree angle to your body. Then push your elbows back as far as they will go and hold for five seconds.
  - Do five to ten repetitions.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Relax your shoulders by rolling them forward five times in a wide circular motion. Reverse the motion five more times.
  - Repeat the cycle five to ten times.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Lower back pain is a common complaint from computer operators.

- Relieve tired back muscles by standing up, hands on your hips, and slowly leaning back to stretch your spine and trunk. Hold for a few seconds and repeat.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Your legs can tire out from inactivity while you're working at a computer as well.

- Stretch your legs by grabbing your shin just below the knee by pulling slowly toward your chest. Hold it for five seconds, and then do the other leg.
  - Repeat until your legs feel refreshed.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Your eyes can get tired from moving too much as they scan back and forth over the monitor's screen.

- To give your eyes some relief, take occasional short breaks to focus on an object at least twenty feet away.

- This helps to relax the eye muscles.

## Stretching and Exercise

- Another way to give your eyes a rest is to simply switch to a different activity like filing, that doesn't involve looking at a computer.

## Stretching and Exercise

- One way you can relieve mental stress is through deep breathing.

- To begin, breathe in slowly through your nose.

- Hold the breath for two seconds, and then exhale through your mouth.

- Repeat this as often as necessary until you've regained a sense of calm.

## Quiz

## Conclusion

- Keep your workplace organized and avoid overreaching;
- Adjust your work surface to maintain neutral body positions;
- Avoid eyestrain by utilizing proper focal distance and adjusting lighting conditions;
- Sustain good physical condition by getting plenty of sleep, eating right and exercising;
- Take occasional breaks to stretch tired muscles and rest the eyes; and
- Relieve mental stress through deep breathing.

## Thank you

On behalf of Gallagher Bassett, thank you for participating in this training program.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your Gallagher Bassett Loss Control Consultant.

Remember to work safely on every job, every day!

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