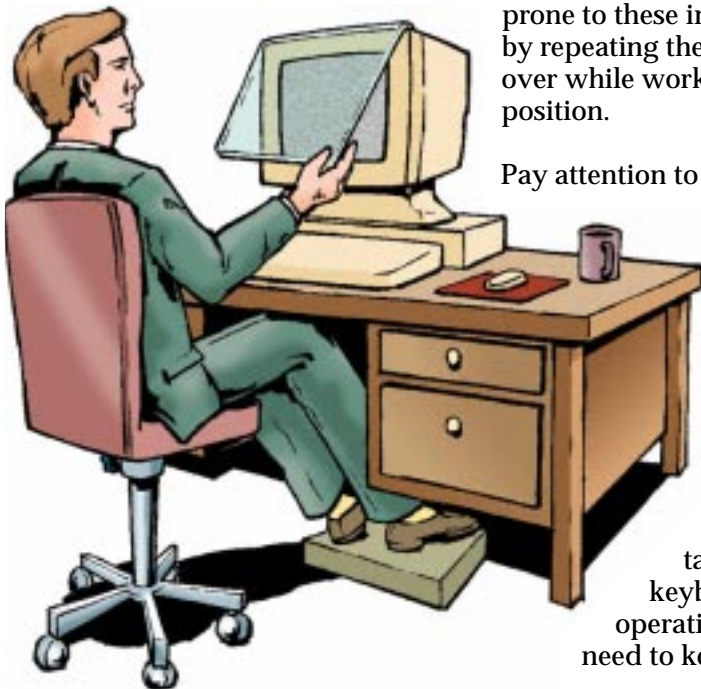


Ergonomics

Ergonomic Improvements

Your ideas count when it comes to ergonomic problems and solutions. Nobody knows your work and your workstation like you do, so you may be able to suggest improvements to increase productivity and reduce the chances of repetitive motion injuries, back problems and accidents.

The study of ergonomics looks at the relationship between the worker and the equipment he or she uses. The goal is to make this relationship comfortable, productive and safe. Ergonomic improvements can be changes in work layout, routines, environment or equipment.



One recent survey indicates nearly half the suggestions for ergonomic improvements are made by non-supervisory employees, not the bosses or engineers. When you find yourself working in an awkward position — struggling to pick up materials, using tools which don't fit your hand comfortably or reaching for a poorly-placed control — think of ways the situation could be improved.

One size does not fit all when it comes to work equipment. Chairs and work surfaces should be adjusted to fit you as an individual to avoid strain on the body's muscles and tendons as you work. Your upper body is particularly prone to these injuries, often caused by repeating the same task over and over while working in an awkward position.

Pay attention to your posture while you work. You should be able to sit or stand up straight rather than hunching over your workbench. The position of your body is very important when you do a repetitive task such as keyboarding or operating a tool when you need to keep your wrists

relatively straight and relaxed. Consider lumbar support while sitting and prop one foot a bit higher than the other while standing. This reduces pressure on your back. Switch feet periodically.

Supplies used frequently should be placed where you can reach them without bending, stretching or twisting. If you are lifting items, you should be able to pick them up and set them down at a height between your knees and shoulders. When you have to pick objects up off the floor or lift them higher than your shoulders, chances of injuries increase. Make use of the materials-handling equipment in your workplace, such as handcarts and lift devices, to eliminate manual handling of heavy items.

Your work station should also be laid out in a logical fashion so the job flows smoothly. If you have to backtrack or take unnecessary steps, the arrangement could use improvement. If there is a chance of accidentally activating the wrong control or contacting moving machine parts, a change is in order.

Talk to your supervisor about how your job could be made better from an ergonomic point of view. Improvements don't necessarily have to be expensive or complicated. Your observations and ideas are important.

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