



Much More Safety

Quarterly Newsletter
JAN 2015
Volume 1 Issue 3

MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY, MOREHEAD, KY <http://moreheadstate.edu/ehs/>
h.niehoff@moreheadstate.edu 606-783-2584



Healthy Work Habits for the New Year

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Daily habits we have at work and home can cause big problems in our well-being over time.

Happy 2015! Over the past few weeks, you may have been like countless other people who made a list of things they want to improve in the new year. Most people typically include getting their bodies in better shape on their list of resolutions. Exercise is certainly very important if you want better health and flexibility! One thing people do not think about often is how their day to day tasks can cause pain and stiffness in their body. You may have noticed that minor aches and pains seem to disappear while you are on vacation over the holidays. Now that you have returned to work and school, the aches and pains are back. Daily habits we have at work and home can cause big problems in our well-being over time.

It is important to address those issues as soon as possible, rather than ignore them and wait until pain becomes unbearable. Often times, a small change in how you typically sit, stand, walk, carry, or bend can make a big difference! It's important to educate yourself on proper posture for your work tasks and continually remind yourself to practice them. It is also important to take breaks, stretch occasionally and get up and move if you have been sitting for an extended time. Likewise, if you typically stand and walk most of the time, it is important to take breaks, sit down occasionally and possibly raise your feet. If you have been experiencing pain from your work tasks for an extended amount of time, and it does not get better despite changing the way you do them, it is a good idea to consult with your physician. A physician will evaluate the underlying cause of pain or discomfort and provide advice to you on proper techniques for your particular tasks, exercises and stretches that can greatly benefit you.

This safety issue is dedicated to helping you be Much More pain free and productive in this New Year!

What is Ergonomics?

Ergonomics is the science of "designing the job to fit the worker, not forcing the worker to fit the job." Ergonomics covers all aspects of a job, from the **physical stresses** it places on joints, muscles, nerves, tendons, bones and the like, to **environmental factors** which can affect hearing, vision, and general comfort and health.

Ergonomics:

The science of designing the job to fit the worker, not forcing the worker to fit the job.

Physical stressors include repetitive motions such as those caused by typing or continual use of a manual screwdriver. Other physical stressors could be tasks involving vibration such as using a jackhammer, or tasks which involve using excessive force, such as lifting a heavy box of books. Working in an awkward position, such as holding a telephone to your ear with your shoulder, can also cause problems. Repetitive motions, vibration, excessive force, and awkward positions are frequently linked to ergonomic disorders; however, the majority of "**Cumulative Trauma Disorders**" (CTDs) or "**Repetitive Strain Injuries**" (RSIs), are caused by repetitive motions that would not result in undue stress or harm if only performed once. Carpal tunnel syndrome, Tendonitis, Tenosynovitis, DeQuarvain's Syndrome, Thoracic Outlet Syndrome, many back injuries, and several other conditions may result from repetitive motions.

Environmental factors could include such things as indoor air quality or excessive noise. "Sick building syndrome," with its accompanying headaches, congestion, fatigue and even rashes, can result from poor air quality in a building or office. Excessive noise around heavy machinery or equipment can cause permanent hearing loss. Improper lighting can cause eyestrain and headaches, especially in conjunction with a computer monitor.

Preventing Back Pain & Injury

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Because your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand, and run, it's important to take care of it. Most back pain arises from using your back improperly, so learning a few basic rules about lifting, posture and proper exercise can help keep your back in good shape.

EXERCISE TO STRENGTHEN YOUR BACK AND REDUCE STRESS - Having strong back and stomach muscles is important in order to ease the work your back is put through each day. By doing simple back-toning exercises, you not only strengthen your back but also reduce stress and improve your appearance, too! Check with your doctor as to the best exercises for you.

LOSE EXCESS WEIGHT - Pot bellies and excess weight exert extra force on back and stomach muscles. Your back tries to support the weight out in front by swaying backwards, causing excess strain on the lower back muscles. By losing weight, you can reduce strain and pain in your back. Check with your doctor for the most sensible diet plan for you.

MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE - You can prevent many back pains by learning to sit, stand and lift items correctly. When you sit down, don't slouch. Slouching makes the back ligaments, not the muscles, stretch and hurt, thus putting pressure on the vertebrae. The best way to sit is straight, with your back against the back of the chair with your feet flat on the floor and your knees slightly higher than your hips. Learn to stand tall with your head up and shoulders back.

MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE WHILE YOU SLEEP AND DRIVE - Sleep on a firm mattress or place plywood between your box springs and mattress for good back support. If your mattress is too soft it could result in a back sprain or sway back. Sleep on your side with your knees bent or on your back with a pillow under your knees for support. Drive with your back straight against the seat and close enough to the wheel so your knees are bent and are slightly higher than your hips.

PLAN YOUR LIFT - Lifting objects is often a mindless task, and unfortunately many people perform their lift incorrectly, resulting in unnecessary strain on their back and surrounding muscles. In order to lift correctly and reduce strain on your back, it's important to plan your lift in advance. This means to think about the weight of the object you will be moving and the distance you will be moving it. Is it bulky? Will you need help? Do you see any hazards that can be eliminated? Think about this whenever you do any lifting.

POSITION YOURSELF CORRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE LOAD - Once you have planned your lift, the next important step is to align yourself correctly in front of the load with your feet straddling the load, one foot slightly in front of the other for balance. Slowly squat down by bending your knees, not your back and stomach. Using both hands, firmly grab the load and bring it as close to your body as you can. This will help distribute the weight of the load over your feet and make the move easier. [Continued on page 4.](#)

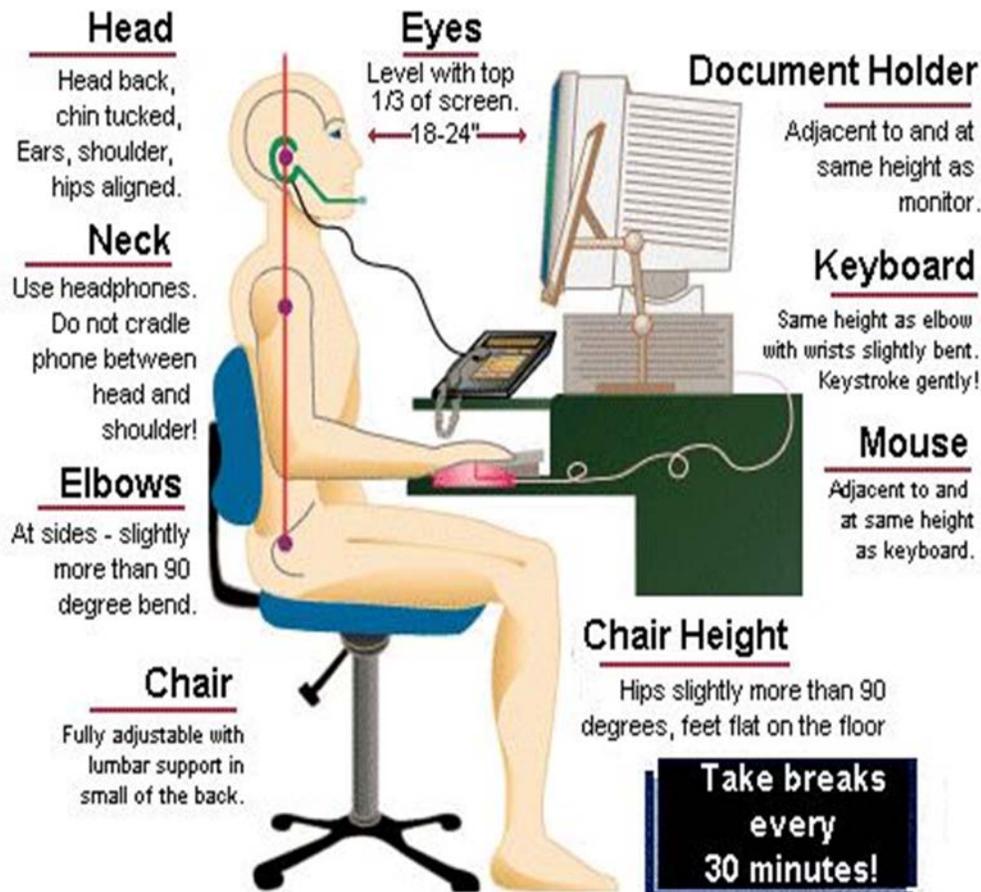
Workstation Solutions

A neutral posture, in which your joints are naturally aligned, helps prevent injury.
How to practice neutral posture while seated:

- 1) Keep your head level or tilted slightly downward. Place your work in front of you so that you are looking straight ahead.
- 2) Sit with your shoulders relaxed, not elevated, hunched or rotated forward.
- 3) Keep your elbows close to your sides and bent at about a 90 degree angle, not extended out in front of your body.
- 4) Use the chair's backrest to support your lower back or lumbar curve.
- 5) Sit with your entire upper body upright or leaning slightly back.
- 6) Keep your wrists straight while you work, not bent up, down or to the side.
- 7) Sit with your knees at the same level or slightly below the level of your hips. There should be no pressure points along the backs of your thighs or at the backs of your knees.
- 8) Place your feet slightly out in front of your knees and make sure they are comfortably supported, either by the floor or by a footrest.
- 9) Remember to get up and stretch every 30 minutes or so. Some good office stretches can be found here: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/adult-health/multimedia/stretching/sls-20076525?s=1>

TIP: A simple solution to an awkward posture - bringing the mouse down to the same level as the keyboard.

Below is a diagram that outlines the basics of an ergonomically correct workstation.



Pay attention to overall posture. Having just one part of your body out of neutral can affect the rest of your posture. Practice adjusting your workstation to achieve a neutral posture for your whole body.

Preventing Eye Strain

Nearly 70 percent of U.S. adults experience digital eye strain as a result of the growing use of devices with digital screens. Adults aged 18 to 34 report feeling eye strain at a higher rate (45 percent) than their older counterparts. Those numbers are based on findings from a 2013 survey conducted by The Vision Council in October 2013 among 7,000 adults nationwide.

Tips for reducing eyestrain:

- 1) Give your eyes a one minute break every 20 minutes. During this time, change your area of focus to something out the window or down the hall at least 20 feet away.
- 2) Reducing glare will dramatically reduce the strain on your eyes. Use anti-glare coatings, close blinds or curtains, reduce overhead glare from lighting by removing bright bulbs or switching to a desk lamp. Use polarized sunglasses when outdoors.
- 3) Adjust contrast Ensure there is good contrast with what you are looking at but reduce contrast for periphery. More contrast makes edges more discernible so the eyes don't have to focus as much. But too much contrast with the surrounding area will cause strain through your peripheral vision.
- 4) Keep computer monitors 18-24 inches from your eyes.
- 5) Don't forget to blink often to prevent dry, itchy eyes & redness.
- 6) Get a yearly eye exam.

Preventing Back Pain & injury, continued from page 2

LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS, NOT YOUR BACK - Once the load is close to your body, slowly straighten out your legs until you are standing upright. Make sure the load isn't blocking your vision as you begin to walk slowly to your destination. If you need to turn to the side, turn by moving your feet around and not by twisting at your stomach.

SET THE LOAD DOWN CORRECTLY - Once you have reached your destination, it's equally important that the load is set down correctly. By reversing the above lifting procedures you can reduce the strain on your back and stomach muscles. If you set your load on the ground, squat down by bending your knees and position the load out in front of you. If the load is set down at table height, set the load down slowly and maintain your contact with it until you are sure the load is secure and will not fall when you leave.

GET HELP, IF NEEDED - If the load is too heavy, bulky or awkward for you to lift alone, find a friend to help you carry it. If no one is available, is it possible to break the load into two smaller loads? Or, can you locate a cart or dolly to help you move it? Look for simple solutions to help make the move easier on you and your back.

Safety Toolbox Tips

Important campus safety reminders and tips:

- Be cautious on sidewalks, stairs and doorway entrance/exit areas when there is ice, snow & salt on the ground. Move slowly and wear proper footwear to prevent slip, trips and falls.
- Please slow down and be cautious of pedestrians crossing streets & parking areas. Pedestrians always have the right of way at crosswalks around campus unless there is a traffic signaling device for pedestrians that signals when they are to cross.
- Sign up for eagle alerts to receive timely information on campus closings due to inclement weather and important emergency information. <http://www.moreheadstate.edu/eaglealerts/>
- Check out MSU Police Department tips on staying safe on campus at: http://www.moreheadstate.edu/News/2015/January/MSU_police_offer_campus_safety_tips/

Announcements & Upcoming Training

- ❖ EHS is excited to announce our newest employee, Derek Lewis. Derek will be our new EHS Fire and Life Safety Technician!
- ❖ Recyclemania is February 1st through March 28th. The MSU recycling rate is currently 10% of our total waste. We can do MUCH MORE! Please remember to recycle!
- ❖ Follow EHS on Facebook and twitter for the most up to date safety information, training and other announcements at <https://www.facebook.com/moreheadehs> and https://twitter.com/MSU_EnvSafety