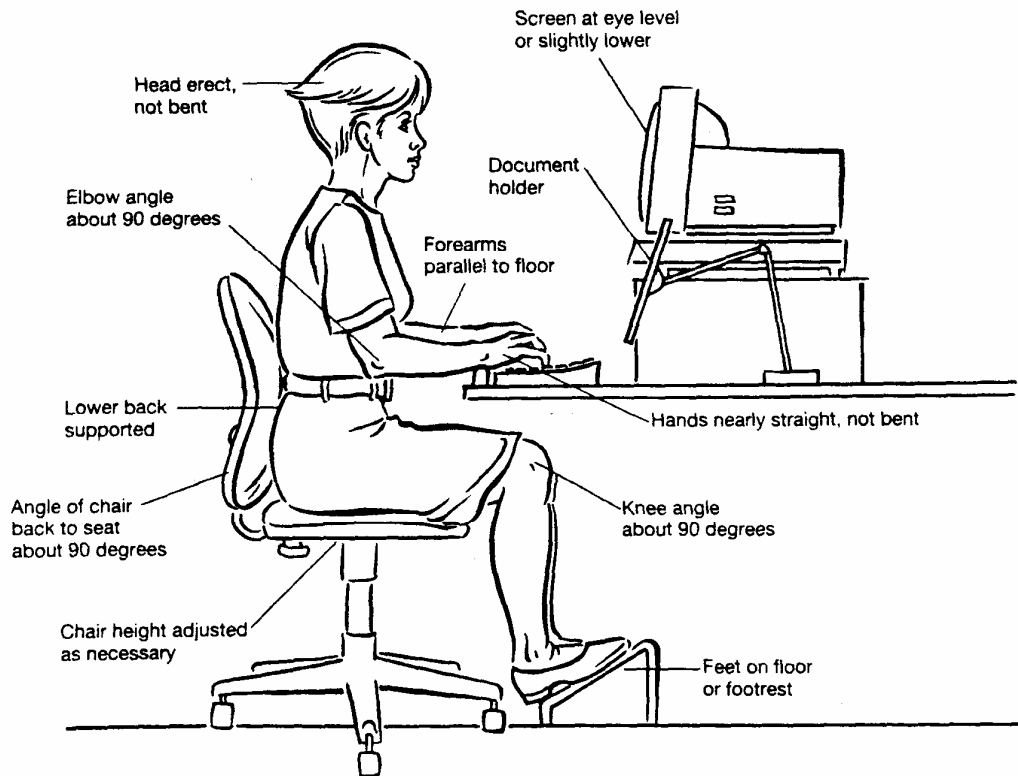


Dr. Shane Explains...

How to Work at Your Computer

Many problems connected with working at a computer station are caused by poor arrangement of the equipment and improper position of the operator. If you enter data, prepare documents, or manipulate figures at a computer workstation, you may have experienced fatigue and pain, especially if you must sit at a keyboard for long periods and work rapidly. If you have physical difficulties with computer work, you may be able to increase or comfort level and reduce your stress level by taking a few simple but important steps recommended by experts.



Sit straight and face the computer screen.

Your body should be erect and not twisted to one side. Slouching may make you extremely tired during a long period working at a computer screen. If your chair does not give good support to your lower back, try fastening a pad or pillow to the backrest.

Place the monitor at eye level or slightly lower.

You should not have to tilt your head forward or backward very much to work comfortably and avoid muscle strain in your neck. If the screen is not at the right level, consider raising it with books or boards. Raise or lower your chair seat if the chair is adjustable. The face of the screen should be positioned so that it is roughly at a right angle to your line of vision. If you place a document holder between the keyboard and the screen, you can reduce the amount of eye movement necessary to do your work.

Set the keyboard at the proper height.

Set the keyboard at a height that allows you to keep your forearm and hand nearly level. Your forearm should be at a right angle to your upper arm. In addition, your hand should be horizontal when you work so you avoid bending your hand up or down at the wrist. A keyboard that slides under a desktop is usually about the right distance above the floor, but one that sits on a desktop itself is probably too high for many people. The part of the keyboard that you use the most should be in front of your body without you having to twist to use it.

Sit so that your feet are flat on the floor and your knees are at a right angle.

If your upper legs are level and your feet flat on the floor or a footrest, you are in a natural, unstressed position. If not, adjust the seat of your chair if that is possible, sit on a pad, or use a footrest. It is especially important that you not dangle your legs or place only the balls of your feet on the floor. Either way, you are putting pressure on your thighs and perhaps cutting off blood circulation to your legs. Consider a footrest.

Also remember:

Take frequent breaks. Some authorities recommend taking a timeout for 10 B 20 minutes in the morning and again in the afternoon. Other experts suggest taking many breaks of 10 B 15 seconds more frequently to stretch your arms and legs. If you have other duties such as making phone calls and filing documents, you may find it helpful to switch back and forth. Try to keep data entry time to no more than 45 minutes per hour.

To reduce eye fatigue, cut down on light reflected from the screen. Adjust the intensity and contrast on your screen until you have good contrast between the characters and the background. Eliminate reflections from lamps or ceiling lights by placing a hood over the screen - even a homemade one will do B and close blinds or curtains to cut off sunlight if that is a problem.

Make sure your eyeglass or contact lens prescription is correct. Let your eye doctor know that you work at a computer and explain the other tasks that you perform. The Doctor and your Optician can help you get the lenses and frames that will prove the most useful and least tiring.

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