

OSH Heads-Up

Tri-State Occupational Health and WORKSAFE IOWA

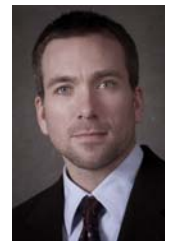
MEMO

TO: Office Workers

RE: Your Posture

Picture the “proper” way to sit at your desk. Do you see that image of a worker with perfect right angles at knees and hips? Except that’s rarely what we do in real life.

Even seated at a desk, you’re in a dynamic situation to an ergonomist like Dr. Nate Fethke of the University of Iowa College of Public Health. He points out, “So many factors are interacting: the chair, the type of work you are doing, the position of the keyboard, the position of the mouse, the position of the monitor relative to the eyes, even the lighting.”



Dr. Nate Fethke

Also known as human factors engineers, ergonomists are interested in optimizing the interface between people and their workspaces, both from a productivity perspective and to reduce the risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis and low back pain.

So here’s the best advice for sitting at your desk: “DON’T.”

Get up and move. Your spine, among other things, will thank you. Your intervertebral discs are the little cushions in between adjacent vertebrae in your spine. To serve as the effective shock absorbers they’re designed to be, they need to be well nourished. But unlike muscles, discs have no interior blood vessels to deliver nutrients and remove waste. Instead, they must rely on a system of small blood vessels at their outermost edges and a pumping action created by movement of the spine. Sitting for an extended period—even one that is “ergonomically correct”—slows down this process of nourishing the discs.

An ergonomist might recommend that a person who spends much of the day seated at a computer adopt a work-rest schedule of 10-15 minutes of non-seated activity for every hour of work—that would not only help restore disc nutrition but give the muscles of the upper arms and shoulders frequent breaks. So give yourself a break!

OSHA (Working Safety with Video Display Terminals) -
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