

Maintaining proper postures

By [Shannon Moore](#), return-to-work consultant

We occasionally see individuals who have had an ergonomic evaluation of their workstation performed, implemented the recommended changes, and still have issues with musculoskeletal pain and symptoms. The issue could be poor posture.

While having a workstation suited to an individual is essential for avoiding musculoskeletal symptoms, the posture of the individual is equally important. Having the appropriate chair positioned correctly is only as good as the person sitting in it. Because many of us spend hours in an office chair, maintaining appropriate posture can help alleviate neck and back pain.

In order to sustain good posture, particularly in an office setting, follow these practical tips:

- Avoid slouching forward with shoulders humped over the workstation.
- Use a wireless headset for phone work and do not cradle the receiver between the neck and shoulder.

- Maintain a neutral neck position without looking up or down frequently or for long periods
- Sit back in the chair taking full advantage of the lumbar support in the seat back.
- Place your feet flat on the floor or on a foot rest
- Don't sit for long periods of time, even in ergonomic office chairs with appropriate support.
- Take stretch breaks.

In addition to these tips, self-check periodically to verify ear, shoulder, elbow and hip bone are aligned while working. For example, if you notice yourself leaning forward toward the keyboard or monitor, ask yourself why. Are the characters on the screen too small? Is the screen too far away? These problems are easy to remedy.

Maintaining proper posture may seem uncomfortable at first, particularly if breaking a poor habit. It may take several days or weeks of mental awareness and conditioning. However, the long term benefits are well worth the effort and it will soon become second nature.

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