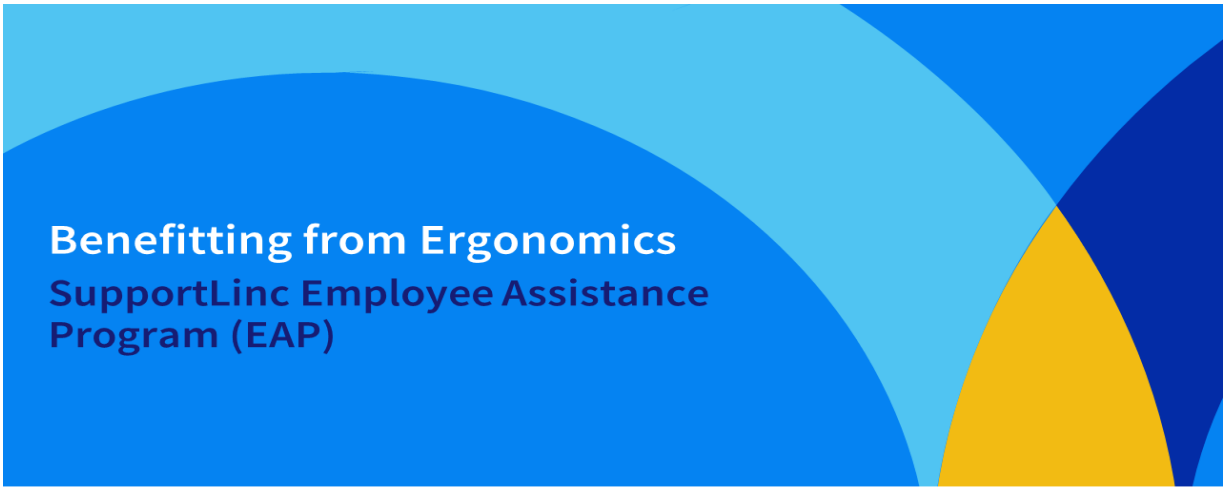
Benefitting from Ergonomics Participant Workbook

Introduction and disclaimer



Penn State Health

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Objectives

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This training is designed to help you:

- Definition & benefits of ergonomics
- Statistics
- Impact on workplaces
- Impact on workers
- Identifying risks
- Improving environments
- Posture practices

What would you like to get out of today's presentation?

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Definitions and benefits

Definition and benefits

The study of efficiency in working environments:

- How equipment and furniture can be arranged to maximize work effectiveness and comfort
- Fits workplace conditions and job demands to capabilities of workers
- Reduces risk of injury from repetitive movement
- Increases impression management

What areas of your workplace ergonomics do you want to improve?

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Statistics

- Work related Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are among the most frequently reported causes of lost or restricted work time.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2013, MSD cases accounted for 33% of all worker injury and illness cases.
- According to OSHA, enterprise employees with work related MSDs require an average of 11 days away from work to recover.
- The average number of days to recover for all other reported work-related injuries is only eight days, translating to an increase of 38% in lost productivity.

Were any of these statistics surprising?

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Impact on workplaces

Impact on workplaces

- Decreased productivity
- Increased health and workers' compensation
- Psychological impact
- Higher turnover
- Retraining costs
- Quality of product or service

How have workplace injuries in yourself or others negatively impacted your work environment?

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Impact on workers

Impact on workers

- Injury & pain
- Unable to do job well
- Increased health cost
- Financial worry
- Lost work hours
- Lowered morale

Have you been affected by workplace injuries? If so, how long did it take to recover?

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Common risk factors

Common risk factors

- Office furniture too big or too small
- Improper use of office equipment
- Motion repetition
- Awkward position for tasks
- Lack of body awareness
- Moving heavy objects
- Cluttered environment

What do you want to improve ergonomically in your work area?

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Types of injuries

Common injuries

- Strains
- Sprains
- Repetitive injuries
- Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs)

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tendinitis
- Rotator cuff injuries (affects the shoulder)
- Epicondylitis (affects the elbow)
- Trigger finger
- Muscle strains and lower back injuries

What injuries are you most at risk for at your job?

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Improving environments

Improving environments

- Workplace design
- Training on risk prevention
- Work rotation
- Recovery periods
- Evaluation of employee capacity
- Input from worker

How is this concept working, or not working, in your life?

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Basic considerations

Basic considerations

Increase awareness of body mechanics:

- Ankles
- Knees
- Hips
- Shoulders
- Neck

Assess office equipment & furniture

Look for goodness of fit:

- Chair
- Mouse
- Phone/headset
- Computer monitor

What do you look for in your workspace, so it is ergonomically beneficial?

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Desk station set-up

Desk station set-up

- Hands, wrists, and forearms are straight, in line, and roughly parallel to the floor
- Head vertical as possible, or bent only slightly forward
- Relaxed shoulders
- Arms hanging loosely, elbows near body
- Back fully supported with an appropriate lumbar support
- Monitor at approximate eye height and arms' distance away

What small changes can you make to your desk area to make it more comfortable?

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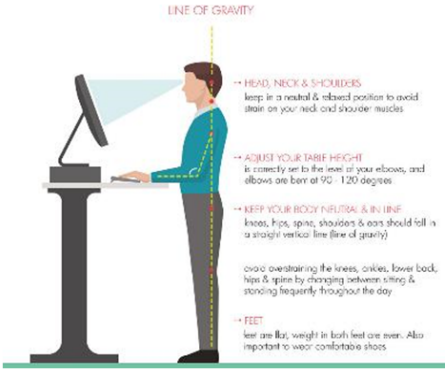
Proper standing posture

Proper standing posture



Feet - Straight ahead with neutral position at the ankle

Knees - Straight ahead in line with 2nd and 3rd toes

Hips - Neutral spine with abdominals drawn in

Shoulders - Neutral, center of shoulder in line with center of hip joint

Head - Neutral, center of ear in line with center of shoulders

Have you used a standing desk before? Did you enjoy it? Is it something you would like to try?

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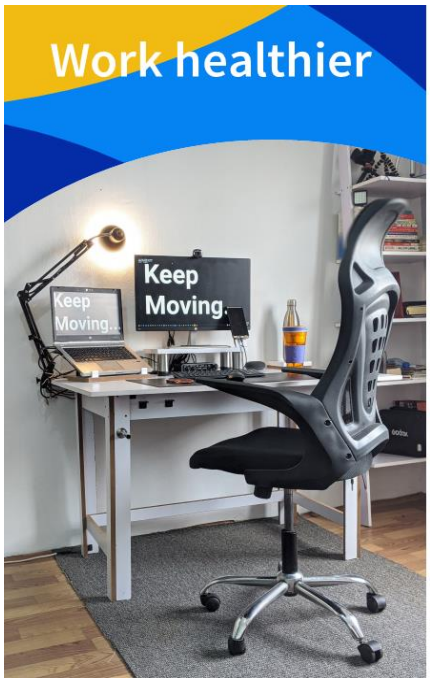
Work healthier



- Provide management support
- Involve workers
- Early reporting
- Identify problems
- Implement solutions
- Evaluate progress
- Adapt & educate

Identify one or two things you can apply to help your work environment be healthier and safer.

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In conclusion

In conclusion

- Ergonomics is the process of designing the workspace to fit the employee's body, versus the employee's body trying to fit the workspace.
- This process can include adjusting tasks, the work environment, equipment and furniture to meet the specific needs of an employee to alleviate physical stress and eliminate potentially disabling work-related injuries.
- Lost productivity from poor ergonomics could easily cost thousands of dollars and perhaps even millions. It can be prevented!
- This is not a small problem and should not be ignored.

What is one takeaway you want to implement in your workstation set-up?

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References

References

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Interactive toolkits

Interactive toolkits

Mindfulness

(www.mindfulness.tools)

Practical tools and exercises for incorporating mindfulness into everyday life.

Resiliency

(www.resiliency.tools)

Skill development resources to help you 'bounce back' from challenging situations.

Meditation

(www.meditate.tools)

Easy-to-use collection of resources that includes guided meditations, tip sheets and more.

Sleep fitness

(www.sleepfitness.tools)

Information and resources to help you learn good sleep habits and achieve healthy sleep.

Visit one of the toolkits for stress and tension relieving techniques.

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What is SupportLinc?

What is SupportLinc?

The SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a health benefit, separate from your medical insurance, offered by your employer to help you manage life's daily challenges.

SupportLinc can refer you to professional counselors, services and resources that will help you and your eligible family members resolve a broad range of personal and work-related concerns.

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Identity theft consultation

Free consultation with an identity theft recovery professionals

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"Convenience" referrals

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Getting started

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Additional resources

Neck and shoulder pain, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome—how can working at a desk job make you feel like you handle a jackhammer for a living? The answer is ergonomics, the science of coordinating physical working conditions to workers. The word comes from the Greek word ergon, meaning work; and nomos, meaning laws.

These *laws of work* aim to make people fit into workplaces to improve health and productivity by making workspaces more comfortable. Many companies have ergonomic programs covering noise, air temperature and humidity, and even how employees sit in front of their computers. Proper ergonomics can ease job stress and prevent chronic injuries and disabilities, such as:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Excessive fatigue
- Eyestrain and irritation
- Blurred vision
- Headaches
- Stress
- Neck pain
- Back pain

If you're concerned about stress and strains on your body, pay attention to your posture. A good ergonomic setup will help you maintain proper posture while you work, while a bad setup will have you twisting and turning all over the place.

Make adjustments if you're uncomfortable. Don't let your office space dictate how you work. A well-designed workplace will boost your energy level, job satisfaction and productivity.

Ergonomic advice

Your body works best when you're in a relaxed, natural position.

Try to limit activities that put you in awkward positions or make your muscles tense. Other things you can do include:

- Varying your tasks so you can alternate between standing and sitting
- Stretching and relaxing muscles and joints that have remained in the same position for long periods of time
- Remembering the 20/20 rule for tired eyes; look about 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes

Use the telephone properly.

If you have to talk on the phone often, use the speaker function or a headset. Resting the phone between your ear and shoulder can cause neck and shoulder problems.

Take brief breaks from repetitive tasks.

Even in the most thoroughly ergonomic workstations, people who sit for long periods of time should change their positions at least once every hour. Try shifting your weight from side to side, standing up and walking around for a minute, or doing some stretching exercises.

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Additional resources

Specific recommendations

Posture: A common posture problem for people who work with computers is holding their heads in front of their shoulders and arching their necks, like turtles peering out of their shells. Slouched backs and rounded shoulders often accompany this poor posture. Working in this position can lead to frequent headaches, backaches and sore necks. Fatigue that can't be relieved by rest breaks is another symptom.

If you experience these types of problems, you should ask a colleague to take a look at your workstation posture and describe it to you. See if you fit into any of the poor posture categories. If so, evaluate your workstation for any changes you can make.

Chairs:

- Chair height should be at a level, so your feet rest flat on the floor and your thighs are almost parallel to the floor. If your feet can't be flat on the floor, use a footrest.
- The front edge of the seat cushion should curve down slightly, allowing a two- to three-inch space from the backs of your knees. Ideally, the seat cushion should be able to slide forward, allowing you to recline slightly.
- The backrest should follow the natural curves of your spine to offer lumbar support. It should also recline. Leaning too far forward can put too much pressure on the back.
- Armrests should be padded and adjust vertically and horizontally. Armrests should be high enough to support your forearms comfortably, but not cause your shoulders to hunch up.
- The chair should have five legs for stability and be able to swivel and roll.
- A chair with a seat that can slide forward as you lean back, or with a reclined backrest with lumbar support, is the best model to prevent back pain.

Keyboards: Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common ailment suffered by office workers. It's caused by repetitive hand or wrist activity. Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on one of the nerves that leads to the hand. One symptom is a tingling or pins and needles feeling in the fingers, especially at night or during activities that involve bending the fingers. Other symptoms include a burning sensation or hand weakness. Contact your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms. To avoid carpal tunnel syndrome, take the following precautions:

- Place your keyboard directly in front of your chair so your arms hang naturally, and your wrists remain in a neutral position.
- Your adjustable keyboard support should have a space for your mouse that prevents overreaching.
- The keyboard support design should allow for your wrists, thumbs, and fingers to remain in a relaxed, neutral position.
- There should be plenty of room for your knees when you use the keyboard support.

Computer screens:

- Place the screen directly in front of your chair and keyboard.
- The top of the screen should be at eye level or one to two inches below eye level.
- Generally, the screen should be 18 to 30 inches from your eyes. However, you may find it more comfortable to place your monitor as far away as possible, as long as you can still see the screen clearly.

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Additional resources

- Your work area should have indirect, overhead lighting.
- The screen should be placed to minimize glare or reflections.
- The screen should be clean.

Contrast and brightness should be adjusted so figures are easy to see. Avoid working on the computer with your major light source in front of you. If you wear bifocals, the monitor should be angled so that you don't have to tilt your head to see the screen.

Office stretches

If you sit for long periods of time, get up and walk around for a minute, or do some stretching exercises. These stretches are quick and easy to do at work, and you should do them several times a day.

Wrist stretch:

This stretch can help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome.

1. Press the backs of your hands together gently.
2. Keep your elbows pointing outward.
3. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat.

Neck stretch:

1. Tilt your head to one side.
2. Grasp your head with your arm from the same side and gently pull.
3. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds and repeat three to five times.

Shoulder stretch:

1. Relax your arms by your sides.
2. Roll your shoulders up, back, down, and forward.
3. Emphasize the stretch on the back and down portions.
4. Reverse direction.

Back stretch:

1. Stand up and place one hand on each hip.
2. Bend backward gently until your lower back begins to arch.
3. Hold for several seconds.

Sitting hamstring stretch:

1. Sit on the floor or on a chair with one leg propped up.
2. Keeping your back straight, lean forward toward the extended leg until you feel a stretch.
3. For a more intense stretch, pull your foot back toward your forehead as you lean forward.
4. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds and repeat three to five times.