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What is Ergonomics?

The CDC¹ defines ergonomics as “the science of fitting workplace conditions and job demands to the capabilities of the working population.” This requires careful assessment of environmental factors that contribute to the way you work.

Good workspace design focuses on strategies to reduce stress, increase productivity, eliminate repetitive movements² that lead to injury, and reduce the overuse of muscles that place unnecessary strain on your musculo-skeletal system.

Here are some elements to consider as you assess ergonomics in your workspace:

Seating. Be sure your chair has an arm rest, head support, and adjustable height options. Do your best to avoid sitting in the same position for long periods of time. Taking micro breaks throughout the day can help increase blood flow and relieve tense muscles.

Posture. Awkward postures and repetitive body movements can lead to injuries. Pay careful attention to how you sit and stand throughout the day and make posture corrections as needed.

Desk. Adjust your desk height to make sure it is at a comfortable level for you. When the height of your desk is misaligned, it can lead to muscle strain and shoulder tension. The position of your keyboard, computer monitor, and mouse can also make a difference.

Noise. While not as obvious as some of the others, background noise is linked to increased muscle tension, low productivity, and even hearing loss in some cases. Noise canceling headphones may be an option for those who are particularly sensitive to sound.

Gait. The way you walk and move your body can also have a big impact on your muscles and ligaments, especially if you routinely carry heavy objects.



Paying attention to the elements that contribute to the ergonomics of your workspace can help you avoid injuries and improve your overall well-being.

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/ergoprimer/default.html>

2. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/heres-how-to-set-up-your-office-to-avoid-aches-pain/>



Tips for Managing Low Back Pain

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are common in the workplace. Globally, it has been estimated that 1 in 10 people suffer from low back pain, which is the leading³ cause of disability worldwide.

Those at higher risk for low back pain share some common characteristics:

- Over age 30
- Sedentary lifestyle⁴
- Smoking
- Overweight
- Repetitive movements

Low back pain is often caused by sudden injuries, like a fall or not using good form when lifting heavy objects. Some injuries, however, occur more slowly over time.

If you experience a new episode of back pain, it is always a good idea to have it evaluated by a medical professional first. Here are some simple self-care tips to help reduce your risks:

Take micro breaks. Taking short breaks frequently can help reduce muscle tightness. Increasing physical activity, even when they are short bouts, has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to alleviate low back pain.

Stretch. Stretching can help relieve muscle tension and pain. Massages, yoga, and foam rolling are a few examples.

Avoid bending forward. Do your best to avoid bending forward while sitting at your desk. This can overextend your spine and strain your back. Aim to keep your back straight with your head centered on top of it.



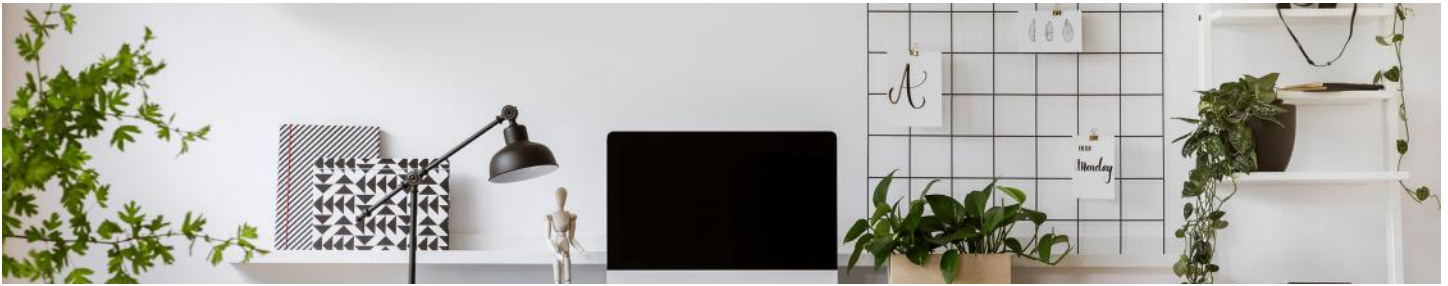
Alternate between sitting and standing. Avoid staying in one position for long periods of time. Adjustable standing desks can make it easier to move between sitting and standing positions without disrupting your work.

Seek medical care. Because low back pain is so elusive, it is best to see your doctor if pain persists despite your best efforts to self-manage it. There may be underlying medical issues that need attention, and addressing it early can prevent further complications and injuries.

To manage low back pain, focus on preventive strategies like minimizing repetitive movements, taking periodic breaks throughout the day and increasing your level of physical activity.

3. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)30480-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)30480-X)

4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.japergo.2019.102894>



Give Your Workspace a Makeover

Whether you work from home or in an office setting, there are some steps you can take to ensure that your workspace supports your wellbeing.

Prior to the pandemic, many offices transitioned to open-plan⁵ formats to encourage employee collaboration, but they inadvertently saw an increase in cold-and flu-related work absences. Sometimes the best intentions do not go as planned. That is why it is important to reassess your workspace periodically, so you can identify factors that may be getting in the way of your health.

Here are a few ways to design a healthier workspace:

Deal with the clutter. While clutter means different things to different people, tidy workspaces generally enhance productivity. If you cannot find what you need when you need it, then it may be time to reevaluate your systems for organizing.

Make healthy snack options easier. If you find yourself in front of the candy jar several times a day, you may want to relocate (or eliminate) it and replace it with healthier snack options.

Assess ergonomics. Assess your seating, desk height, keyboard and mouse positioning, and how you interact in your workspace.

Adjust the temperature. According to a 2020 study, the ideal temperature for both energy saving and productivity is 77 degrees⁵. If you have the ability to adjust the thermostat, you may want to fine-tune the temperature to boost your productivity.



Decorate with live plants. Research suggests that adding living green plants⁵ to your workspace can improve your health. Not only can plants spruce up the vibe of the workspace, but they have also been shown to help remove air pollutants.

Healthy workspaces encourage healthy behaviors. You spend so much time in your workspace each day, make sure it supports your wellbeing in a positive way.



Easy Ways to Improve Your Ergonomics (And Why You Should)

Many people may only know the term 'ergonomics' from oddly shaped keyboards or expensive office chairs, but it is a far-reaching process designed to make work safer and more efficient. In the process, it can save a company substantially.

Importance of Ergonomics

Ergonomics is important for health reasons. When a body works in a way that is not ergonomically friendly, it creates stress through awkward postures, extreme temperatures, or repeated movements. This can lead to discomfort, fatigue, and pain, and over time can cause musculoskeletal disorders. Ergonomics seeks to combat these problems in a number of ways. Surface heights may be altered so there is less bending. Replacing telephone handsets with headsets can reduce neck strain by preventing a user from craning their neck to hold the phone. A properly established computer work station can prevent muscle strain from holding uncomfortable positions for long periods of time, such as bent wrists used for keyboard and mouse use. There are more methods of implementing ergonomics than there is space to list them, but they all attempt to prevent strain on the person doing the work so the body works at maximum efficiency, using its full potential for longer.

How to Become Ergonomic

There are countless ways to make a work environment more ergonomic, but here are some easy suggestions. Remember, the goal of ergonomics is to take action to reduce strain on the body, which can be caused by repetitive motion, uncomfortable body positions, heavy lifting, vibration, and more.

The easiest and lowest-cost way to improve ergonomics is likely by making improvements to computer work stations.

1. Adjust your chair before starting your shift and again after lunch, as your body changes throughout the day.
2. Sit with your monitor 16-29 inches away from your head, with your eyes positioned, they look straight ahead at the top third of the monitor.
3. Have your keyboard tilted so your arms remain straight from the forearm through the hand during the typing process, not bent at the wrists.
4. Sit up straight in your chair and make sure you have support for the lower back. If your chair does not curve to support your entire back, use a pillow or other cushion.
5. Arrange your desk so the items you use most frequently are within easy reach, without having to stretch or bend for them. Anything not within arm's reach should be charts or other reference materials that do not require reaching.
6. If you type from printed documents, use a document holder that sits right next to or below the monitor, so you only have to move your eyes and not your head to see it.
7. Avoid holding the phone with your neck. If you use a phone frequently, consider getting a headset to reduce the stress on your neck muscles.



Carrot Apple Soup

Prep Time

20 Minutes

Cook Time

45 Minutes

Servings

10

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) canola oil
- 6 carrots (about 1 1/4 lb/625 g), chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) mild curry powder or paste
- 1 cup (250 mL) brown or green lentils
- 2 teaspoon (10 mL) dried thyme leaves
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups (1 L) water
- 2 cups (500 mL) sodium reduced vegetable broth
- 2 empire, golden delicious or cortland apples, cored and chopped
- Hot pepper sauce (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a soup pot, heat oil over medium heat and cook carrots, onion and curry powder for about 5 minutes or until the onion softens. Stir in lentils, thyme and garlic. Pour in water and broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and let simmer for 20 minutes. Add chopped apples and simmer for about 20 minutes or until lentils and carrots are tender.
2. Puree soup in the blender or food processor in batches until smooth and return to a clean pot. Heat through and stir in hot pepper sauce to taste if using.
3. Tip: This soup freezes well in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.



Nutrition Facts

Calories	124
Protein	6g
Fat	2g
Carbohydrate	22g
Fiber	5g
Sugars	7g
Sodium	128g
Potassium	386g

Source:

[Carrot apple soup](#) | [Heart and Stroke Foundation](#)



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