



What is...

Ergonomics?

Ergonomics is the study of how you "fit" in your environment. The ultimate goal of ergonomics is to adapt the work place to the person. In other words, the work environment should be adapted to YOU, not the other way around. This is important because when the work station fits your needs, fatigue and stress decrease and your comfort increases. In the long run you are more efficient and you decrease your risk of getting a repetitive trauma disorder. An example of a repetitive trauma disorder is carpal tunnel syndrome or "tennis elbow" (tendinitis).

Repetitive stress conditions occur when tendons, muscles and nerves are placed under stresses and strains that at first seem very slight, but over time can eventually cause wear and tear to the soft tissues of our bodies. There are many different aspects of wear and tear, and if you can decrease or eliminate any of these aspects, then the risk for this type of injury can also decrease.

Since it is your body, it is your responsibility to try to identify these risks and take an active role in reducing the risks. Consider things like how much force is involved in a job, how long are you subjected to that force (not just hours in a day but how much repetition), what kind of rests you get, and how long you have to maintain static postures. Consider also environmental factors, such as lighting, vibrations and temperature. And finally, take into account your overall general health.

Following are some things you should evaluate about your job or duties, and suggestions of ways to adapt your work place. If you find there are some areas that may place you at risk, contact your employer or health professional to arrange getting things changed.

- Are you using proper body mechanics? If not, obtain information on proper body mechanics and use the concepts during activity.
- Are you keeping the tools that you need within close and easy reach? If not, rearrange your space or hang tools up so everything is convenient to reach.
- Are you using the correct tools? Do they fit your hands properly and are they padded if there is vibration involved? If not, check with your supervisor to have the proper tools and any needed accessories issued to you.
- Are you taking regular and periodic breaks so your hands and body are not subjected to too much fatigue? If not, plan and implement consistent yet short breaks

throughout the day, perhaps using a timer so you don't get excessively involved in the activity and forget to take rest periods.

- Are you eating proper meals and maintaining a regular exercise program? If not, consult with the appropriate health professional regarding proper diet, basic exercises and stretches, as well as getting enough sleep and rest.
- Is your computer or desk station set up so that you have good posture, and that you are not always twisting in one direction over and over? If not, examine the diagram below to make sure the chair and desk station are set up correctly. Be sure there is proper lighting.



- A) Hips and knees should be at 90 degrees, feet flat on floor/footrest.
- B) Shoulders should be relaxed (not elevated) and elbows should be held at 90 degrees.
- C) Monitor should be at eye level.
- D) Keyboard should be positioned so wrists are not bent up or down or twisted.
- E) A lumbar roll or support should be used to provide low-back support.
- F) If you do other types of desk work, tilt the work up instead of lowering head and neck.

If you have any questions, consult your RESTORE at 212-594-6054.