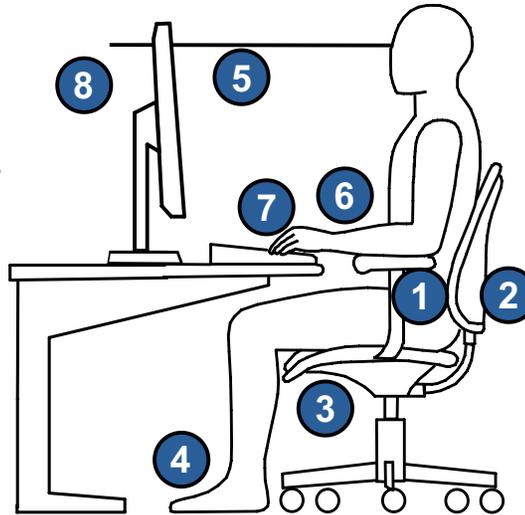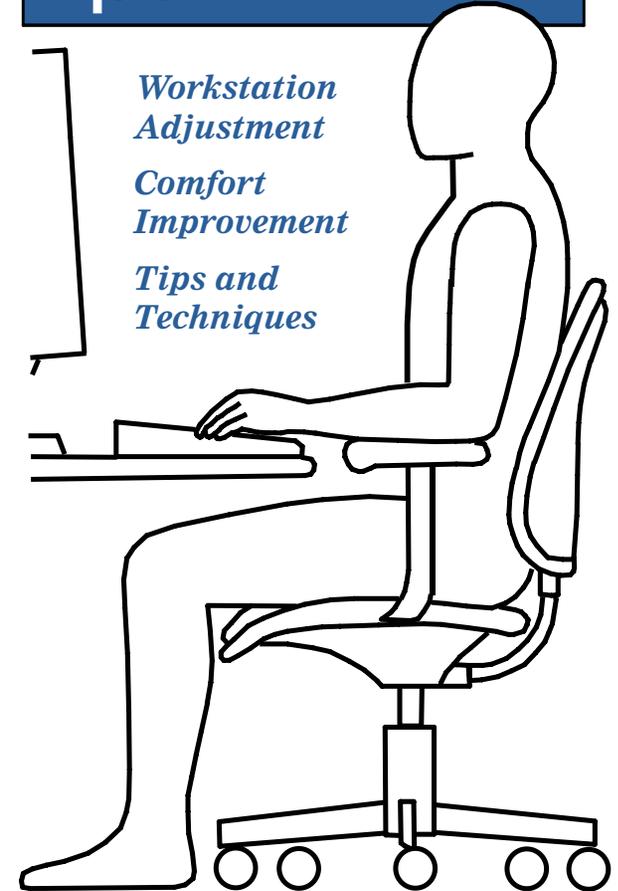## Steps for Adjusting Your Workstation:

1 Adjust the chair height so your elbows are at about desktop level.

2 Adjust seat back for good support of the lower back, using a lumbar pillow if needed.

3 If your seat has a tilt feature, set this so you are comfortably supported.

4 If your feet don't comfortably reach the floor or there is pressure on the backs of your legs, use a footrest or lower the keyboard.

5 Locate your monitor so the top of the viewing area is at or below eye level so you are looking slightly downward as you work.

6 With elbows at desk level, your wrists should be straight. Use a wrist rest if desired, and if you have armrests try to adjust them so they support your arms without being too high or too low. Use small pads on armrests if needed.

7 Locate the mouse next to the keyboard, so both elbows are by the sides while working. Use your mouse pad or another soft surface to pad edge of desk. Avoid pressing your hands or forearms against any sharp edges.

8 Adjust screen brightness and contrast for clear comfortable viewing, and clean the screen frequently.

Finally...Practice Safe Lifting in Offices

Remember that people often do more lifting in office areas than they realize. Think and plan before using manual effort -- don't twist or jerk while lifting, keep loads close to the body, keep your back in its natural curvature, get help if needed, and use mechanical assistance whenever it is available. Other ideas: avoid placing heavy boxes on the floor; change from heavy bottled water to in-line filtration; use contractors to pack and move offices. Practice safe lifting and exertion methods off the job, too.

Office Ergonomics Tips

Workstation Adjustment

Comfort Improvement

Tips and Techniques

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OFFICE ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics is the applied science of improving the match between people and work. When we talk about office ergonomics, what we mean is sitting with neutral postures, adjusting and locating equipment for comfort, being watchful for health problems, and using fatigue-reducing techniques while working. Here's what you need to know:

Things You Should Know...

People are often concerned that working in offices with computer keyboards, mice, and monitors is unhealthy. Although research is evolving, here are some current answers to common concerns:

✓ EYESTRAIN or "COMPUTER VISION SYNDROME?" Eyestrain, or "computer vision syndrome," is not an injury or damage to the eye. It is temporary fatigue. Although eye fatigue or eye strain are among the most common problems experienced by people working with computer equipment, these are temporary. The eyes are directed and focused using muscles which can become overworked. Intensive visual tasks can lead to temporary blurring, soreness, headaches, redness, and dryness. If you have these or other eye problems that don't go away, check with your eye doctor. You may need glasses that are designed for computer use, with different focus distance and near-vision area.

✓ NECK AND BACK PAIN? Neck fatigue, back pain, and discomfort in the upper back or shoulders are also common problems experienced by people working in computer workstations. Use the posture and technique tips below to minimize fatigue and avoid problems.

✓ SOFT TISSUE AND JOINT SORENESS? With long durations spent sitting in fatiguing postures and incorrect workstation arrangements there is an increased likelihood of experiencing of soreness or pain in joints or soft tissues. Listen to the signals your body sends, and see the prevention tips on the rest of this page.

MSDs, CTDs, and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

✓ In some people with particular individual factors, extensive computer work can result in more serious medical problems in the hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders, or neck. These are called musculoskeletal or cumulative trauma disorders (MSDs or CTDs). The most well-known of these is carpal tunnel syndrome, or CTS, a medical condition affecting the hands and wrists. Symptoms of CTS are pain, tingling, and numbness in the hands and fingers, often noticed first at night or while driving.

✓ **Computer use alone is generally not likely to cause CTDs or CTS in healthy people**, even when some of their symptoms are felt more during those activities. The physical demands of compuer work can combine with individual medical or lifestyle factors to cause problems in some people while being healthy for others. Non-work factors known to increase risk for experiencing the symptoms of CTS include high blood pressure, obesity, hormonal changes, arthritis, diabetes, pregnancy, kidney, thyroid, or liver problems, gout, and aging. See your physician with any concerns.

Comfort & Fatigue Control...

Equipment design and adjustment are important, but can only promote comfort, not guarantee it. You still need to use good posture and work methods to avoid problems. No chair or workstation permits sitting for hours with no discomfort -- you need to move around, take short breaks, and stretch to control fatigue.

Posture and Positioning

✓ Compare your body positioning and workstation arrangement to the graphic on the other side of this page. Face your work directly, keep the spine in its natural curves, with the head and neck upright and not slumped forward. Keep both elbows close to the sides of the body, and position the chair and surface so it is at about elbow height -- this keeps wrists and arms in line and reduces fatigue for the muscles and tendons.

Technique and Arrangement Tips

✓ **Minimize static muscle contractions.** Prolonged slumping, reaching, bending, twisting, or holding the arms up while working causes fatigue and discomfort to develop much more rapidly. That is because static muscle contractions reduce circulation. Locate the monitor in line with the keyboard and the mouse next to the keyboard. Arrange yourself so you can relax your upper back, neck, shoulders, and upper arms. You don't need a special keyboard to use neutral hand and arm postures: keep hands and wrists in line with the arms.

✓ **Move your chair closer** to permit working without constantly leaning or reaching. Make sure to "scoot" your chair in every time you sit down.

✓ **Avoid cradling the telephone or mobile phone with your head** for any extended periods. Use a hand, a speaker phone, or headset instead.

✓ **Rest your eyes** by periodically closing them for several seconds, then looking at an object at least 20 feet away. Take steps to control screen glare, and use a document holder next to the monitor if you look back and forth at hard copy.

✓ **Lower your monitor**, and avoid stacking monitors on top of CPUs or laptop docking stations. Neutral eye position for close visual tasks is 20 to 60° downward. **Also, farther away is better.** Try to sit about 30 inches from your monitor, or about arm's length.

✓ **Avoid over-use of laptop** keyboards and touchpads for all-day intensive computer work. Use a standard keyboard and mouse to improve comfort, speed, and accuracy.

✓ **Avoid pressing palms and wrists against sharp edges while working.** Use gel palm rests and soft mouse pads to shield you from edges.

✓ **Locate frequently used items within easy reach**, and practice good housekeeping with the rest. Don't let clutter create fatiguing posture problems.

Early intervention is important, no matter what the cause...

If you have tingling, numbness, or pain in the hands or wrists that won't go away, see your physician.

Contact Barbre Ergonomics at 817-454-2242