

Importance of Ergonomics in the Workplace

It has long been understood that ergonomics offers numerous benefits, but recently a stronger emphasis has been placed on the importance of ergonomics in the workplace. The subject of ergonomics in the workplace has become so important, that it is now going to be addressed by the new OSHA standards to be released for 2010. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration musculoskeletal injuries are on the rise. These injuries are commonly caused by a workstation that is improperly set-up.

Such injuries can include carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis and low back pain. These injuries are now considered to be among the leading causes for disability within the modern workplace. OSHA estimates that as many as 1.8 million work-related musculoskeletal disorders occur every year. These injuries result in a loss of 650,000 work days per year; more than 1/3 of the total amount of workdays that are lost on an annual basis.

Ergonomics seeks to prevent such injuries by studying the relationship between the workplace and people in order to improve comfort and overall efficiency while on the job. Due to the fact that almost 70% of all work performed in the country today is done while at a seated station, many ergonomic considerations apply to work that is performed at a computer.

Adjusting your chair height so that your feet are able to rest flat on the floor and your knees are flexed at a ninety degree angle can help to provide proper lumbar support and prevent strain. The top of a desk should be situated so that it is about two inches lower than the forearms, with the computer monitor no more than an arm's length away. The monitor should also be adjusted so as to reduce glare. Ergonomics can also be applied to the keyboard so that the upper arms are able to rest in a relaxed position with the elbows at a ninety degree angle and the wrists pointed forward. This will help to avoid placing strain on the wrists and hands.

Ergonomics has also shown that taking several short breaks is more beneficial than taking a couple of long breaks over the period of a workday. One ten minute break for each hour of work should be taken in order to avoid problems such as repetitive strain injuries.

Practicing good ergonomics can not only help to avoid injuries in the workplace, but can also help workers to be more efficient and productive.

How many work days are lost each year because of musculoskeletal injuries?

- A. 100,000
- B. 500,000

- C. 650,000**
- D. 1 million

How much work is performed at a seated workstation across the country?

- A. 25%
- B. 50%
- C. 70%**
- D. Almost 100%

When seated, your knees should be bent at what degree?

- A. 25 degrees
- B. 45 degrees
- C. 90 degrees**
- D. 180 degrees

You should take a 10 minute break for each _____ of work?

- A. One hour**
- B. Two hours
- C. Three hours
- D. Four hours