

DoD Ergonomics Working Group NEWS



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Observing Ergonomics Month... All Year Round!

October is National Ergonomics Month, but smart ergonomics practices should be observed every day. Use these “52 Ergonomics Tips of the Week” to educate and inspire your coworkers throughout the year.

1. Use eye drops to prevent your eyes from drying out when using the computer.
2. To check if your body is properly aligned when typing, align the “B” key on the keyboard with your belly button (only works for standard keyboard designs).
3. The computer monitor should be placed between 20 and 30 inches away from your eyes. If you need it closer, you should get your eyes checked.
4. Use the 20-20-20 Rule. When typing, take a break every 20 minutes and look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.
5. Ensure you have a lumbar support when sitting. A lumbar support can reduce the amount of stress on your back by 40 percent.
6. Support your arms when typing. Use of armrests or a keyboard tray can reduce back stress by 15 percent or more.
7. Keep your shoulders relaxed when typing. Typing with the keyboard too high causes the shoulder and arms to overcompensate and will eventually lead to shoulder pain.
8. The top of the computer monitor should be at eye level. Monitors positioned an inch or more higher than eye level are associated with neck pain.
9. Prevent extended reaches of your arm. Items that you use more frequently should be placed close to you.



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10. Performing prolonged computer work? Force yourself to yawn. This moistens your eyes and reduces tension by relaxing your facial muscles.

11. Reduce stress to your body. Position work so your elbows are down by your sides and your arms are bent at right angles.

12. Sit directly in front of your monitor. Twisting your neck to view the monitor will result in neck pain.

13. A footrest will not only support your feet; it also helps support your back.

14. A split-key keyboard will improve your wrist posture but it is not a guarantee that it will prevent a work-related musculoskeletal disorder such as carpal tunnel syndrome or tendonitis.



15. Bifocal users must extend their neck to view the computer monitor. Investigate using glasses designed specifically for computer use to improve neck posture.

16. Do not tilt your monitor upwards; it makes it more susceptible for the overhead lights to form glare spots on the monitor.

17. A joystick designed mouse puts less stress on the wrists than a traditionally styled mouse.

18. Do not extend your arm to use a mouse. The mouse should be located next to your keyboard within forearm reach.

19. Do not place a computer monitor directly in front of a window. Sunlight entering the window coupled with looking at the monitor places a lot of strain on the eyes.

20. Take microbreaks! A short 30- to 60-second stoppage in work while performing stretching exercises will help relieve stress until you can take a break.

21. Avoid bending your trunk; when lifting whenever possible raise items to waist height to reduce back stress.

22. Avoid twisting your trunk when lifting; keep your work in front of you to reduce the risk of a back injury.

23. What difference do a couple of inches make? Lifting a 25-pound item 4 inches away from your body versus close to your body will result in your back working at least 30 percent harder.

24. If you can see the imprint of your watch on your wrist, the band is too tight and you may be causing damage to your wrist. Loosen the band.

25. What does smoking have to do with ergonomics? Smokers have higher back injury and carpal tunnel syndrome rates.
26. Back belts will not help you lift more weight and there is no evidence that they prevent back injuries.
27. Avoid daily activities that place the arm above shoulder level. This will significantly decrease the risk of a shoulder injury.
28. Bending the back while lifting can be stressful; this condition can also add more forces being placed on your back.
29. The weight of a backpack should not exceed 15 percent of your weight. Exceeding this increases your risk of back injury.
30. When placing items on shelves, store the heaviest items on the middle shelves and the lightest objects on the top and bottom shelves.
31. Be cautious; the word ergonomics is not regulated by the government. Just because something is labeled ergonomically designed does not necessarily make it so.
32. Design or modify your workstation so all lifts are in the lifting strike zone (i.e., the beginning and end of your lift are between mid thigh and chest level and close to your body at all times).
33. Lift with your legs—they are designed to provide a mechanical advantage to the body. The back places the body at a mechanical disadvantage.
34. Have a lot of stuff on your desk? Place the items you use most frequently closest to you to avoid repeated extended reaches.
35. People have preconceived notions how systems work based on past experiences. To avoid confusion do not use the color red to indicate “on” or an upward motion to turn off a system.
36. On the telephone a lot? Use a headset; avoid telephone cradles since they still force the neck to bend to the side and the shoulder to be raised.



37. Try to use hand tools that are as light as functionally possible. It will reduce the amount of force needed to operate the tool.

38. For heavier hand tools, ensure two hand use.

39. Glove selection is important; wear work gloves that fit, are flexible, and come with grips. Otherwise extra effort is needed to perform tasks.

40. Bent angled tools are not necessarily ergonomically designed. Match the task being performed with the right tool so the wrist is not bent.
41. Hand tool handles should be compressible and stay captive in the hand. Otherwise the hands and fingers are subject to pain due to soft tissue damage and reduced blood circulation.
42. Why is it hard to open jars? The muscles used to tighten (clockwise) can exert more force than the muscles used to loosen (counterclockwise).
43. Take a short break if you feel tired. Breaks are associated with reduced injury rates and do not lower productivity rates.
44. Pushing is the easiest form of manual material handling. Try to convert lifting and lowering activities to pushes.
45. On average, workers experience their first back injury at age 35.
46. People with a previous back injury are more susceptible to re-injury.
47. When lifting, break larger loads into smaller, lighter loads. Repetition is better than heavier weights.
48. Use manual movement devices such as carts, dollies, or forklifts to move items, even if it takes longer to perform the task.
49. Plan the lift ahead of time especially if there is more than one lifter.
50. Always position yourself in front of an object being lifted to reduce reaching or twisting.
51. Did you know the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health states that under ideal conditions you should lift no more than 51 pounds?
52. The most stressful lifts are those that begin and end at or below knee height and those that begin and end at or above shoulder height.

