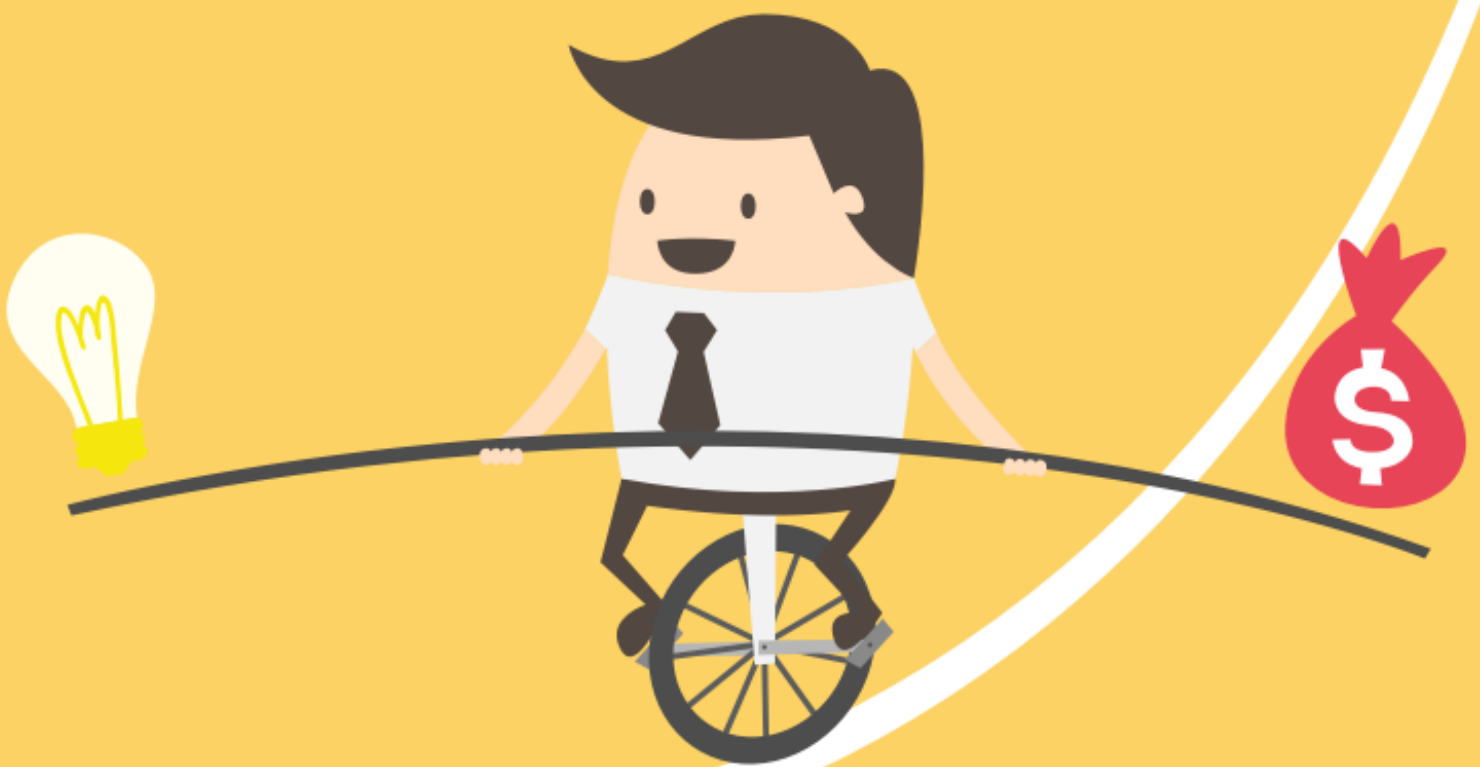


5 simple strategies to improve office worker comfort, productivity and prevent injuries



Setting up the workstation

Many of the hazards and risks in an office environment relate to the workers desk set up. A poorly set up workstation may increase ones risk of developing musculoskeletal strains and sprains. Educating workers on best practice workstation ergonomics is essential.

Setting up the workstation

Starting with the chair

1. Start with determine what the purpose of the chair is for i.e. 8 hour work shift or 24 hour work shift, single person use or multi person use. The chair type needs to meet the needs of the job task with regards to duration of sitting, weight capacity and adjustable features
2. Chair fit – does the seat pan and backrest suit the individual’s dimensions. Does the chair weight capacity meet health and safety standards for the individual using it?
3. Chair base depth and tilt – adjusted to allow 2-4 fingers gap between the front of the chair and back of the calf and seat pan angle flattened
4. Chair base depth and tilt – adjusted to allow 2-4 fingers gap between the front of the chair and back of the calf and seat pan angle flattened
5. Back rest angle - adjusted to approximately 100-120 degrees recline from 90 degrees upright. Lumbar support height – adjust to support the workers lower back
6. Chair height – adjust to bring the worker’s upper limbs to desk height. Implement a footrest if necessary.
7. Adjust arm rests so that they don’t interfere with the desk edge

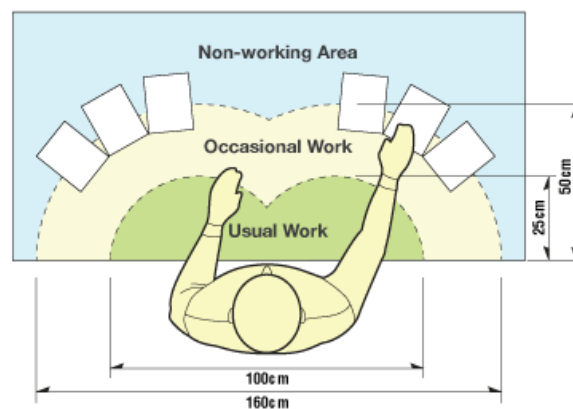
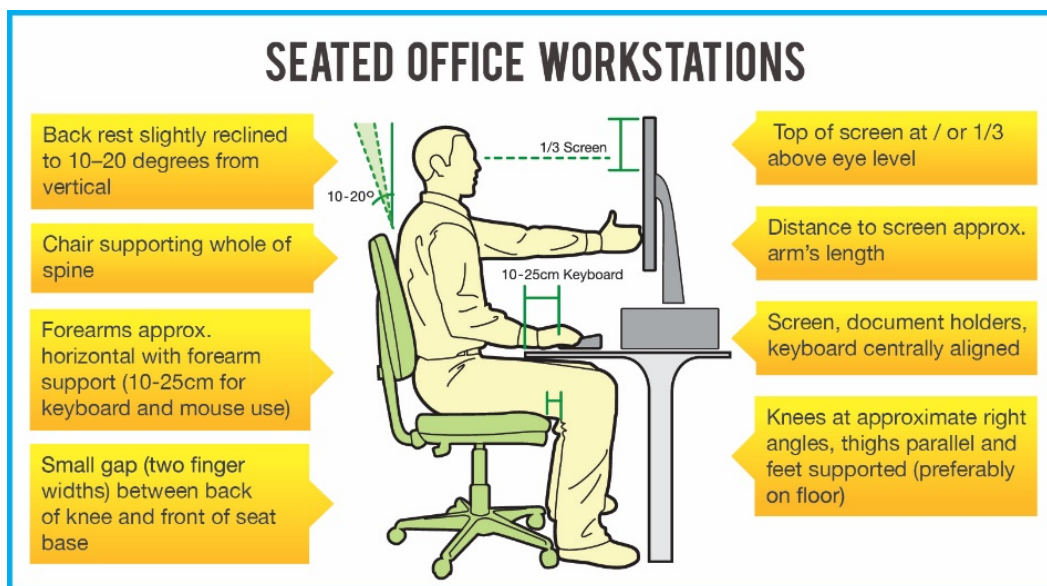
Next move to the keyboard and mouse

1. Are the keyboard and mouse in good working order?
2. Adjust keyboard so the worker has 100-250mm of upper limb support while maintaining good spinal support from the chair
3. Adjust the mouse to sit as close to the edge of the keyboard as possible
4. Ensure the keyboard and mouse are a comfortable size for the worker’s hands

Setting up the workstation

Next move to the monitor(s)

1. Monitor height – adjust so the top of the monitor/monitors are approximately eye height for all workers except those who wear bifocal/multifocal lensed glasses (as these workers will prefer their monitor(s) lower)
2. Monitor distance – adjust so monitor(s) are approximately arms distance from the eyes
3. Monitor position – adjust a single monitor so it sits directly in front of a worker. Multiple monitors adjust depending on the use of the monitors with a heavily dominant monitor still in front and shared monitors split either side of the worker.



Encourage movement and regular breaks

Workers who spend most of their day at the workstation should be looking to take regular breaks to minimise their exposure to the following risk factors:

1. Static work postures
2. Repetitive movements
3. Awkward work postures
4. Long duration working postures

2: Encourage workers to take more regular short breaks

1. Individuals should be encouraged to take regular breaks i.e. get up every 45-60 minutes and move away from their desk
2. Walk and talk with colleagues
3. Challenge workers to consider how they perform their work tasks and to chunk work tasks into small bite sized times (30 minutes) before switching to alternative task that changes their posture and or body movements

3: Create an office environment that encourages more movement

1. Remove bins from the desk and create a central bin area to encourage people to move
2. Encourage stand up meetings and or walking meetings
3. Implement hot desk sit stand desks that allow workers to rotate on and off to perform some tasks standing

Workplace risk assessments

4: Conduct workplace risk assessments

The best businesses manage and educate their workers on workplace hazards and risks and manage these according to the risk control hierarchy. Every business has a duty of care to their workers and this includes providing a safe workplace and the appropriate equipment and training.

For office workers, their biggest hazards and risks are associated with working at the desk and many businesses don't seem to see this as being something worth focusing on, instead focusing on more obvious hazards and risks such as manual handling hazards and other hazardous tasks.

The best time to conduct a workplace risk assessment is:

1. Workplace induction
2. When workers change desks and/or are provided new or additional equipment
3. Following a return from extended leave
4. When individual circumstances change i.e. worker becomes pregnant, worker experiences musculoskeletal aches and pains

Many businesses often focus largely on the physical domain of ergonomics and often forget or place little emphasis on the organisational and cognitive domains of ergonomics. It is important to remember that a good risk assessment should incorporate more than just a review of the workplace equipment i.e. chair set up, workstation accessories set up. It is important to consult workers regarding the organisational and cognitive domains to identify where stress points could be presenting for an individual or team.

Workplace risk assessments

There are many different strategies that a workplace could implement as part of their OHS management system and some ideas include:

1. Online workstation training
2. Office desk sweeps
3. 1:1 consultation with the workers
4. Educational workshops

5. Assess the workers home office set up and/or assess their mobile work environments

The modern-day workplace has evolved to many workers now working from home and/or working across a variety of non-traditional work environments i.e. café/hotel rooms etc.

If you have workers conducting regular work from home as part of their formal work arrangement it is important that the home office (now their workplace) is assessed for hazards and risks.

Home office ergonomic risk assessment should include:

1. Assessment of the home office workstation i.e. chair, desk and accessories
2. Review of the home with regards to general health and safety. This may include stairs, trip hazards, manual handling, smoke detectors, fire blankets/extinguishers & child care arrangements

Workplace risk assessments

A mobile worker is not anchored to a workstation and may hot desk/flexi desk within the business or may need to perform work tasks across a number of environments.

If you have workers working offsite or from non-standard work areas such as cafés/hotel rooms it is important any hazards and risks are consulted over. Educate workers on how to perform a dynamic risk assessment themselves.

This should involve them assessing their work area and equipment available to use. In many situations workers may have to be flexible and make the most of what is available and make the best choice they have at that time i.e. chair, desk etc.

Provide workers with mobile portable equipment and accessories. This includes a laptop riser, compact keyboard and mouse.

Educational Posters and Handouts

OFFICE WORKSPACE ERGONOMICS

THE DESK LAYOUT

DESK ARRANGEMENT

Less frequently used equipment should be placed further away from the worker.

Commonly used desk equipment and accessories should be placed close to the worker to allow for easy access.

SITTING POSTURE

CHAIR

- Workers arms parallel with the desk height
- Chair arm rests should not prevent the worker from sitting close to the desk
- Feet should firmly touch the ground or the use of a footrest is required
- Chair base and back rest providing adequate back support

MONITOR

- Eye line should be with top 1/3 of the monitor
- Monitor should be directly in front of the worker
- Monitor distance should be 50-60cm away from the worker (arms length)

KEYBOARD ERGONOMICS

- The keyboard position should sit approximately 10cm-20cm from the edge of the desk
- There should be enough space to allow for the wrists to rest on the desk if required.
- The forearms should be parallel or slightly above the desk edge.

DESKTOP ACCESSORIES

- Wrist supports for keyboard and mouse used where appropriate
- Telephones or headset within reach of worker
- Reading/Writing holders used where appropriate

GOOD SEATED POSTURE

- Worker sits into the back of the chair
- Worker has adequate back and lumbar support
- Feet can touch the ground firmly
- Thighs are parallel to the ground
- Worker can sit close enough to the desk

FOOTREST

- Some workers are not able to place feet firmly on the ground will often place their feet on the chair legs or prop away from the edge of the desk
- Adequate support for the worker will provide and encourage good seated posture

MOUSE ERGONOMICS

- Wrist position is neutral
- Mouse adjacent to the keyboard & close to the desk edge (less than 10-15cm)
- Arm not outstretched or abducted
- Worker sits front on to the mouse

STANDING WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS

- The arms should be parallel to the desk when set in the correct standing working height

Max Height Range 1100 - 1300mm

Min Height Range 850 - 950mm

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We have produced a number of different handouts for you to download and use within your business to educate your team on best practice office workstation ergonomics, vehicle ergonomics, manual handling posters. Click on the link below:

Educational Posters - [DOWNLOAD](#)

Speak to our consultants

We offer a range of ergonomic consulting services that include:

Office desk sweeps

Individual ergonomic risk assessments

Specialised ergonomic risk assessments

Home/Remote office ergonomic risk assessments

Vehicle ergonomic risk assessments

Educational lunchtime workshops

Ergonomic train the trainer courses

If you have a specific question or would like to get a quote on any of the above services, please contact us

Email: admin@corporateworkhealth.com.au

Call us on 1300 951 519 [Learn more](#)