

# Posture Critical at the Computer

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Have you ever switched off your computer and felt as if you had spent the day digging ditches? If your neck is sore or your wrist aches after a long day of word processing, you may be working with equipment that had been improperly installed.

Monitors that are positioned too low or keyboards that are placed too high can lead to a variety of ailments, from chronic wrist fatigue to eyestrain.

Proper posture, a good office chair and adequate lighting – along with accessories such as a palm rest and footrest – are essential for anyone using a computer for extended periods of time.

Lots of folks know all the complicated commands for Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel but know little about ergonomics.

Ergonomically designed furniture and computer accessories are designed to work with your body. Their purpose is to keep you from straining muscles in your wrist as you manipulate a mouse, or hurting

your back as you swivel around in your chair.

Unfortunately, too little attention is being paid to creating comfortable work environments. Consumers will spend several hundred dollars for a powerful PC but will pull a chair from the kitchen table to sit on.

Until now, the computer industry has been too busy making money to pay much attention to user comfort. Now manufacturers are responding to user complaints about ailments such as eyestrain, neck soreness and a painful wrist condition called carpal tunnel syndrome.

Inside your wrist are eight carpal bones, which form a tunnel-like structure. The tunnel is filled with tendons which control finger movement. Also in the tunnel is an important nerve leading to the hand.

The performance of certain repetitive tasks such as tapping a keyboard all day can cause tendons to swell inside the tunnel. That places pressure on the median nerve, and can lead to a loss of feeling in the certain parts of the hand.

There may be also numbness, pain and tingling in

the thumb, index and ring fingers. If left untreated, carpal tunnel syndrome can become permanent.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to prevent CTS. Regular rest breaks or at least five minutes an hour, are important. Your company's nurse or your personal physician can tell you about isometric hand and wrist exercise that can do at your desk.

Also important is the position of your hands as you type.

Generally, your hands should extend straight from your wrist.



A keyboard that is too low can cause you to spread your elbows in an unnatural position. A keyboard that is too high is more dangerous. It can lead to pain in our wrist, elbows and shoulders, and help create carpal tunnel syndrome.

The keyboard is at the same height as your elbows while you're typing, or slightly above your elbow.

Experiment with both position. If possible, choose a desk with an adjustable keyboard

tray. Some office supplies stores sell adjustable keyboard racks that can be bolted onto your desk.

Look for wrist, palm and footrest. The wrist, palm and rest are pads you place in front of your keyboard, allowing you to rest your wrist and palms as you type.

Footrests for people whose feet barely touch the floor as they type help prevent placing undue pressures on the back of your thighs. If you want to be pampered, invest in a model that vibrates.

A sharply focused L.E.D. monitor is important and people concerned about eye strain should consider investing in a monitor of at least 17 inches.

Ask your optometrist about monitor placement, proper lighting, and how to avoid eyestrain.

Just make sure you do something.

In one of its recent advertisements, Logitech commented about repetitive motion injuries and predicted "the problem is significant." When the industry is admitting there is a problem, well all ought to listen.