

Evaluating Workstation Equipment

In the past, older types of equipment and furniture often contributed to physical stress, trauma and injuries in the workplace. Now, engineers design ergonomically-correct equipment, furniture and accessories that are safe, functional, attractive and comfortable. The trick is using this equipment to its best advantage. Before you can decide how to best use these new aids, you should first evaluate your present work environment.

Your Chair

An ergonomically-correct chair allows you to sit in a natural, relaxed position with your feet flat on the floor and your lower back well supported.

To evaluate your chair, ask the following questions:

- Can you adjust the height of the chair so that your feet are flat on the floor?
- Can you adjust the height of the chair so that your arms are parallel to the floor and your elbows are bent at right angles when you are using the keyboard?
- Does the chair comfortably support your lower back?
- Do the arm rests support your arms without strain?
- When seated, are your hips correctly elevated slightly higher than your knees?
- Does your chair allow enough room for you to comfortably move your legs beneath your work surface?



Your Work Surface

Whether you work at a desk or a work bench, your work surface should allow you to perform your tasks comfortably and without strain. Here are some questions to keep in mind:

- If your work surface is a desk, is there room enough for you to stretch your legs beneath it?
- Does your desk have enough space for you to arrange document holders, books and other frequently used materials nearby so that you don't have to stretch for them?
- Does the surface of your desk cast a glare on your computer monitor?
- If you use a work bench, can the work surface be adjusted in height so that your materials are readily available to you without excessive stretching or reaching?
- Can the work bench surface be tilted to move items closer to you?

Your Computer

More than design, the position of your computer and how you use it will determine how ergonomically correct it is. When evaluating your computer equipment ask:

- Is the monitor placed at a height that allows your eye level to be about six inches above the center of the screen?
- Is there glare on the monitor screen from outside sources or interior lighting?
- Can you adjust the height of the keyboard with a keyboard platform to make it more comfortable to use?
- Is your mouse or trackball on the same level as your keyboard, and can you use it without reaching or feeling discomfort in your arms and shoulders?

Properly evaluating your workstation will alert you to less than desirable ergonomic conditions and allow you to correct them. You'll get a lot more done in the process.

