

Have You Adjusted Your Office Chair?

Sitting in an office chair for prolonged periods of time can cause stress on your body. Sitting in an office chair, or sitting in general, is a static posture that increases stress in the back, neck, shoulders, arms and legs. (Static posture means that you're not moving.) When we sit for a long period, we tend to slouch, which can overstretch muscles. Over time, an incorrect sitting posture can cause damage.

An ergonomic chair is a chair that allows you to adjust it to fit your body. That is the advantage of the ergonomic chair and the word "ergonomic" is synonymous with the word "adjustable." Oftentimes, we just accept the chair as is and sit in it without adjusting it, so it is not serving its full purpose.

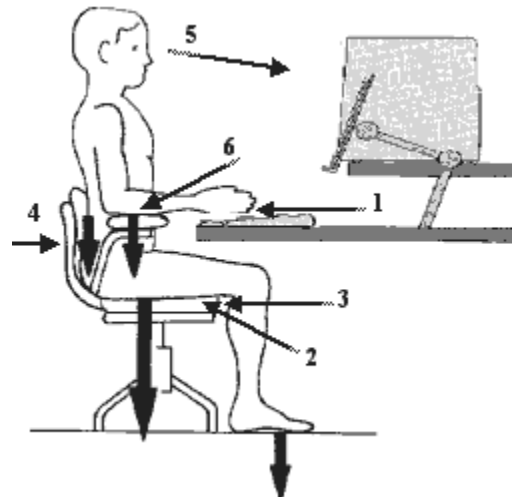
The basic ergonomic chair will allow you to adjust the height of the chair from the floor and the height of the back of the chair to provide the proper lumbar support. Some chairs have adjustable arm rests, backs that move closer or farther from the seat pan and seat pan angles that can be adjusted.

Let's start with the desk height. This may or may not be adjustable and it will depend upon the type of work you do and your height. But many workstations are set up based on a standard. Once your desk height is established, we can look at your chair.

Top Six Guidelines for Office Chair Setup

1. Elbows

Sit as close as possible to your desk with your upper arms hanging naturally by your sides. Bring your forearms up and put your hands on your keyboard. Your forearms should be parallel to the floor and your wrists should be straight, not bent. If not, adjust your chair up or down until you are in this position.



2. Thighs

Check to make sure your chair has a cushioned, "waterfall" front, so your legs rest comfortably on the edge of the chair without cutting off your circulation while your feet are flat on the floor. If you have too much room, more than a finger width between your thigh and the chair, you may need to raise the height of your work surface.

3. Calves

Sitting all the way back in your chair, with your back against the back rest, you should be able to fit your fist between the back of your calf and the front of your chair. If you can't do that, the seat pan may be too deep. In this case, you should adjust the back of the chair farther forward until you can fit your fist between the chair front and your calf.

4. Low Back Support

You should sit all the way back in your chair, taking advantage of the back support your chair can provide. There should be a built-in lumbar support that hits your low back in the small, curved space of your back. If it doesn't hit you in the right spot, you should move the back of the chair up or down until the lumbar support is correctly placed. You may need to enlist the help of a co-

worker to make this adjustment. The correctly placed lumbar support will help reduce the stress on your back from prolonged sitting, as long as you are resting against the back of your chair.

5. Resting Eye Level

Sitting back in your chair you should be able to draw a straight line, which is parallel to the floor, from your eyes to the top of the screen or just below that point. Our eyes normally take in the view below that line. The exception to this will be if you wear bifocals, trifocals or progressive lenses. In that case, your gaze will be lower so your screen should be lower. Many computer screens sit too high, causing you to lift your neck in an unnatural position, straining your neck. A small change to correct your view of the screen can make a world of difference in your neck.

6. Armrests

The armrests are there to rest your arms when you're not typing. When typing, you want full mobility of your arms from the shoulder. This is a more natural posture than resting your arms on the armrests with your shoulders scrunched up toward your ears.



No matter how comfortable you are in your office chair, you're still in a static posture and it's not good for your body to be in a static posture all day. Be sure to stand, stretch and walk for at least a few minutes every hour. If you can walk during lunch or on one or both of your daily breaks you will promote healthy blood flow and be more productive in your daily work. In addition to healthy blood flow, regular movement will keep joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons loose, promoting an overall feeling of comfort, relaxation and ability to focus.

