

# Ergonomics and You

Ergonomics is the study of the kind of work you do, the environment you work in, and the tools you use to do your job. It can prevent musculoskeletal injuries such as back strain or carpal tunnel syndrome by reducing physical and mental stress caused by the workstation setup. This is why it's important to evaluate your work process, including job organization, worker rotation, task variety, and demands for speed and quality.



## Office Ergonomics

The goal of office ergonomics is to set up your office workspace so that it fits you and the job you are doing. By focusing on the physical setup of your workstation and the tools you use, you can reduce your chances of injuries.

It focuses on how things are set up in your office workspace such as:

- Your workstation setup, how you sit, and how long you stay in one position
- How you do a certain task, the kinds of movements you make, and whether you make the same movements over and over
- Your work area, including light, noise, and temperature
- The tools you use to do your job and whether they are set up to fit your needs

Office ergonomics can help you be more comfortable at work. It can help lower stress and injury caused by awkward positions and repetitive tasks.

It's common for injury and illness to happen at work. Both can cost you and your employer time and money. They can also affect how well you do your job. Injuries can cause stress and strain on your muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, blood vessels, and spine.

You could also be at risk for problems such as [tendinopathy](#) and [bursitis](#). These are caused by overuse and repetitive movements. Over time, these kinds of movements can make you feel bad. They can cause long-term health problems. And they use up your sick time.

By applying ergonomic solutions, you may be able to reduce physical problems and improve your comfort and ability to work effectively.

A properly set up workstation could have the following positive effects:

- Reduce problems such as headaches or eye strain

- Reduce neck and back pain
- Prevent bursitis or tendon problems that are linked to doing the same task over and over (repetitive tasks)

## Ways to use your workstation properly

When setting up an ergonomic workstation, choose workstation tools that fit your personal, physical, and comfort needs. Consider utilizing a work surface or desk that is large enough to accommodate papers, reference manuals, and other workstation tools. Ensure the desk or work surface is at a height that allows enough space for your knees and thighs to fit comfortably underneath. Arrange your work to reduce stress on your body. If you are using a laptop as a secondary workstation, try using a docking station with an adjustable keyboard and mouse to help keep your wrists in a neutral position to reduce stress and strain.



These tips can also help avoid the cumulative effect of repetitive motions:

- Try to sit or stand comfortably in a position that does not put stress on any specific area of your body. You should be able to keep your neck in a neutral position and minimize the need to look up or to the sides continuously while you are working
- Try to not move from your waist
- Keep the workstation and workstation tools within reach without having to lean, bend, or twist at the waist frequently
- Vary postures if possible
- Take 10- to 15-second breaks frequently throughout your task
- For example, look away from your computer monitor, stand up, or stretch your arms. Short breaks reduce eye strain and buildup of muscle tension
- Take regular breaks
- Try taking 3- to 5-minute breaks—or changing tasks—every 20 to 40 minutes. Working intensely over long periods of time without taking breaks can greatly increase your risk for musculoskeletal injuries. Taking breaks and stretching may reduce the risk of repetitive motion injuries
- Do stretching exercises during your breaks

Stretch your body by getting up out of your chair and stretching your [arms](#), [shoulders](#), [back](#), and legs. When you are sitting, shrug and relax your shoulders.

Having proper office ergonomics can help reduce your chances of injury and stress, and can even make your work day comfortable and enjoyable.

## Wellness Articles

Alberta Health Services encourages all Albertans to live a healthy life. These weekly Wellness Articles are created by a team of healthcare professionals from AHS in collaboration with provincial healthcare experts in Alberta and content from [myhealth.alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca). Our experts ensure this information is factual, current, and written for Albertans.

From stress-relief strategies to finding balance within your life, these Wellness Articles cover a variety of different topics designed to inspire and educate Albertans on creating a positive and healthy lifestyle.

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