



Ergo-Robics

Compiled by
R.Myles McMorris, B.Sc., O.D.



Photodisc file

Primary Eye Care Centre

205 - 52 High St.W.
Moose Jaw, Sask.
S6H 1S3

Phone: 306-693-8584
Fax: 306-693-4429
WebSite: www.pecc.sk.ca



By Jacqueline Stenson, MSNBC

Office work may not exactly be strenuous but it can take a toll on the body nonetheless, experts say. Typing for long hours can stress the hands and arms, and sitting in a static posture for extended periods may lead to cramped muscles and pinched nerves, research suggests. That's why many occupational health professionals advise warming up before work and performing stretches and exercises throughout the day. Think of it as ergo-robics.

START THE DAY off with five minutes of simple stretching exercises before beginning work, advises Dr. Mark Melhorn, a clinical assistant professor of orthopedics at the University of Kansas in Wichita who also works as an ergonomics consultant to businesses.

"It's basically to get your body systems warmed up and supple — just as you would if you were getting ready for a sporting event," he says. "The key is to start with a simple body stretch, like some jumping jacks or stretching the arms up over head and down by the sides."

Take five minutes and do something that's not tied to the computer, such as picking up your mail, making copies, checking the fax, getting a drink or talking rather than e-mailing a colleague — "something that makes you get out of your static, sitting posture," Melhorn says.

"The biggest mistake is when people get focused on a project and just burn on it until it's done," he says.

As a reminder, consider using an alarm or software program that alerts you when it's time to rest, says Karen Sziel, an occupational therapist at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle.

People who keep their eyes glued to the screen for extended periods without appropriate breaks may be at increased risk for repetitive stress injuries, she says.



Throughout the day, take at least one more stretch break,

Take five minutes and do something that's not tied to the computer, such as picking up your mail, making copies, checking the fax, getting a drink or talking rather than e-mailing a colleague — “something that makes you get out of your static, sitting posture,” Melhorn says.

“The biggest mistake is when people get focused on a project and just burn on it until it's done,” he says.

As a reminder, consider using an alarm or software program that alerts you when it's time to rest, says Karen Sziel, an occupational therapist at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle.

People who keep their eyes glued to the screen for extended periods without appropriate breaks may be at increased risk for repetitive stress injuries, she says.

AFTER HOURS

Engaging in regular physical activity outside the job also is important for preventing pain on the job, according to experts.

“As you improve your physical conditioning, your ability to maintain an ideal position improves,” Melhorn says.

Marilyn Moffat, a professor of physical therapy at New York University

and a past-president of the American Physical Therapy Association, recommends a fitness regimen that includes not only aerobic activity but also weight-training and flexibility exercises.

Strength-training of the upper body is particularly important for keeping the shoulders, back and arms strong enough to withstand long hours at the computer, she says. And abdominal exercises help strengthen the trunk and promote good posture; slouching can lead to muscle strain and pinched nerves.

However, too much strength-training may overwork the body, especially if good form is not used with free weights, she says, and that can contribute to repetitive stress injuries. Melhorn suggests lifting weights no more than three times a week.

If you already suffer from a painful condition such as tendonitis, consult your doctor or physical therapist about an appropriate weight-training regimen; overdoing it may exacerbate the problem.

Preventing pain and injuries on the job is just one more reason to stay fit, experts say.

“If [your body] is strong, it's going to be less likely to injure,” Sziel says. “You decrease your chances by being in good condition.”

Ergo-Robics

Office work may not exactly be strenuous but it can take a toll on the body nonetheless.

Typing for long hours can stress the hands and arms, and sitting in a static posture for extended periods may lead to cramped muscles and pinched nerves.

That's why many occupational health professionals advise warming up before work and performing stretches and exercises throughout the day.

Think of it as ergo-robics.



Primary Eye Care Centre

205 - 52 High St.W.
Moose Jaw, Sask.
S6H 1S3

Phone: 306-693-8584
Fax: 306-693-4429
WebSite: www.pecc.sk.ca