

Office ergonomics start with

A R M S

A is for adjustment and alignment

A simple chair adjustment makes a huge difference, says Karen Bitzer, occupational therapist and rehab manager at University Hospitals Case Medical Center.

Adjust the height of your chair, back rest and armrests, so that your elbows, hips and knees are bent at a 90 degree angle, and your forearms and thighs are parallel to the ground.

Ensure that your feet are parallel to the floor and your wrists are level with your desk.

If you work in front of a computer, adjust your monitor to about eye-level, so that you're glancing slightly down.

Adjust height of computer desk and chair to minimize muscle strain and fatigue.

Tip: If your feet don't touch the ground, use a footrest. Supporting your feet takes some of the strain off your back.

R is for relaxation

Taking a break is beneficial to both your mind and body, Bitzer says. When your muscles are constantly contracting, toxins begin to build up. Relaxing improves circulation, removing those toxins and providing oxygen to your tissues



Tip: Visit a co-worker at his or her desk to deliver a message instead of sending an email.

M is for motion

"The next posture is the best posture," says Gary Allread, program director for the Ohio State Institute for Ergonomics. "There's no one bad posture as long as you don't use that posture all day long." So mix up the muscles you're using throughout the day.

S is for standing and safety

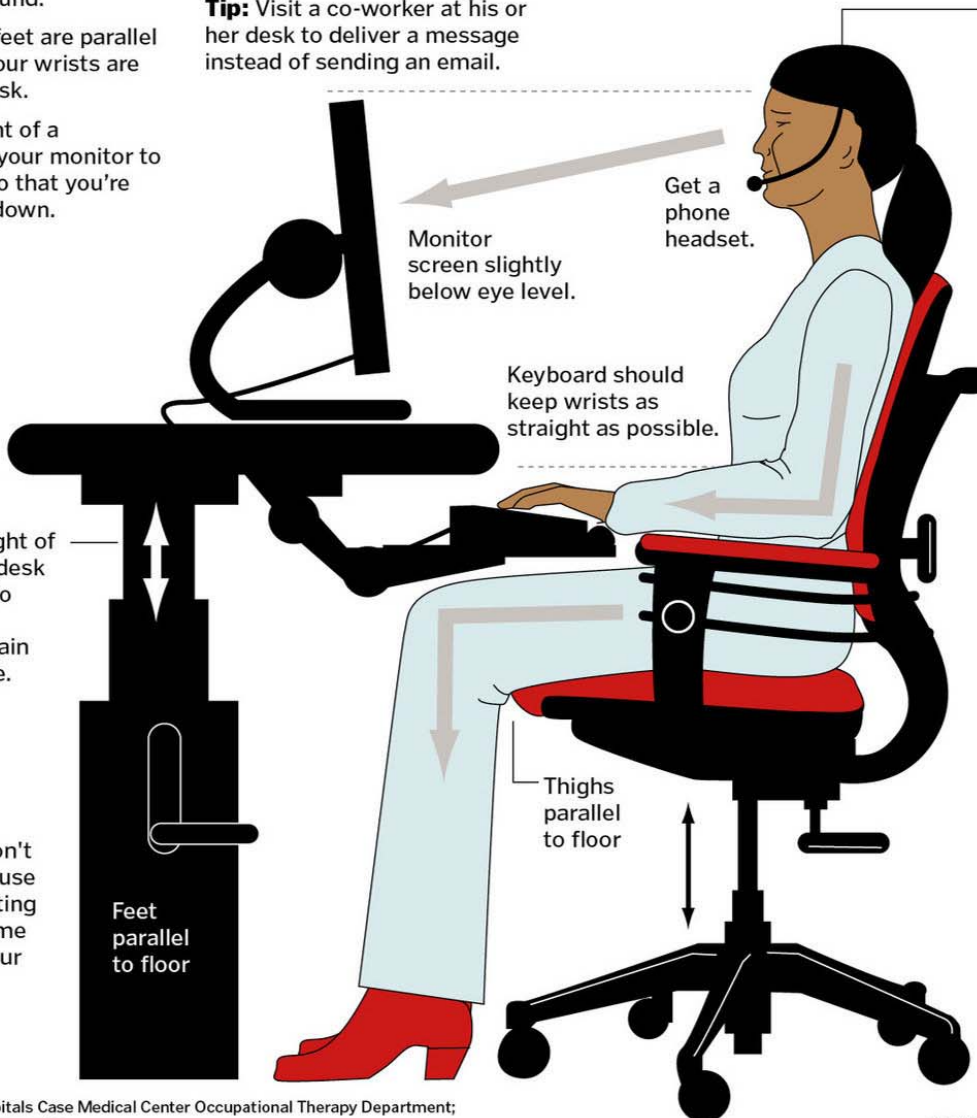
Stand at every opportunity, suggests Tom Adams, an ergonomist at the Cleveland Clinic. Stand up during meetings, or while you're talking on the phone.

Tip: If you spend more than 30 percent of your day on the phone, use a headset to avoid straining your neck. Position the phone on your non-dominant side so that you can easily jot down notes as you talk.

Tip: Every half hour, take a micro-break for a minute or two, Bitzer suggests.



1. Let your arms hang down to your sides and shake out your hands and wriggle your fingers.
2. Shrug your shoulders, then move them in a circular motion first back then forward. Finally, pull your shoulder blades together and release them.
3. Pump your ankles and point and flex your feet.
4. Straighten and bend your legs at the knee.
5. Cover your eyes for a few seconds and then focus them on something on the distance to prevent eye strain.



— Natalie Villacorta,
The Plain Dealer