

ERGONOMICS

DEFINITION

ERGO (WORK) NOMICS (THE STUDY OF)

Ergonomics considers how the design and structure of jobs, equipment, and tools affects our health. The tools we use and the tasks we perform at work can contribute to discomfort, injuries, and illness. Lifting, reaching, or repeating the same movements may cause a strain or injury to the body.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Injury may appear suddenly or gradually over a period of weeks, months or even years.

Signs may be observed by the practitioner, and include swelling, redness and poor posture.

Symptoms are sensations that you feel such as numbness, tingling, pain, decreased range of motion and headaches.

Symptoms may be in a local area such as the shoulder, or in a larger area such as the back. Symptoms are not always distinct or obvious because you may be experiencing more than one area of injury or an insidious onset of injury.

Do not ignore early signs or symptoms. Conditions such as tendonitis or bursitis or carpal tunnel may develop, affecting your ability to work or do simple day-to-day activities.

WORK RELATED POSITIONS AND SITUATIONS THAT INCREASE STRESS ON THE BODY

- **Repeating movements especially at high speeds, or for prolonged periods of time.**
- **Sitting, standing or holding an object in the same position for long periods of time.**
- **Reaching far forward or far behind.**
- **Static positions such as holding your arms in front of the body for extended periods of time.**
- **Twisting and bending while moving heavy objects.**
- **Working in awkward postures such as bent over or holding your arms above shoulder height.**

TREATMENT

Your Registered Massage Therapist (RMT) will assess your signs and symptoms, evaluate your general state of health, and carry out special testing to determine the cause and extent of your injury, and provide treatment based upon your specific needs. Massage Therapy plays a key role in improving posture by facilitating a balance in the body. This balance then helps the patient to make postural adjustments and to correct habitually poor posture. RMTs provide postural training, manual techniques, therapeutic exercises, hydrotherapy and self-awareness training to help patients improve posture at work and at leisure. Plus, your RMT will give suggestions for improving your workstation.

TIPS TO DECREASE STRESS OR STRAIN FROM WORK AREAS WHILE SITTING

- **If working at a computer, set your keyboard to allow your shoulder and neck muscles to relax. Your forearms should be at a 90-110 degree angle.**
- **The screen should be slightly down from your eye level. While typing or working at a desk, take breaks on the half hour and do the stretches recommended by your RMT.**
- **Never hold the phone receiver between your neck and shoulder, consider using a phone headset.**

WHILE STANDING

- **Always face your work area, decreasing your chance of twisting.**
- **Try to keep knees slightly bent, stomach in (pelvic tilt), and shoulders in a neutral and relaxed position.**