

FALL UPDATE

ERGONOMICS

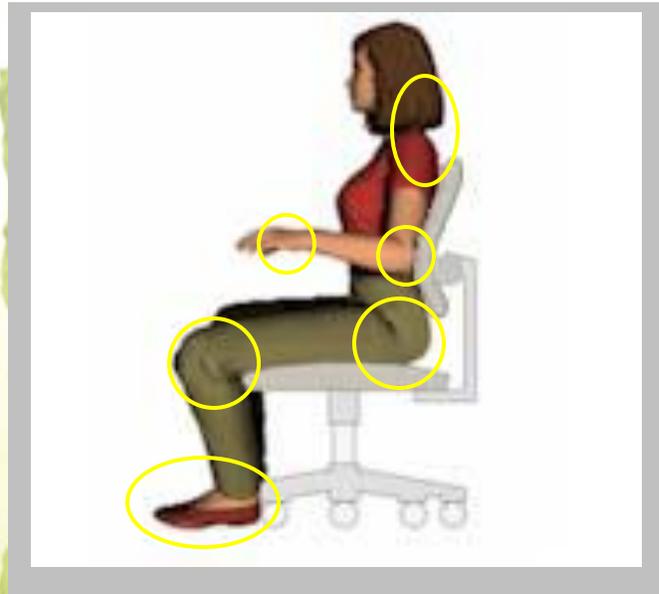
THE KEY TO A HEALTHY PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

Ergonomics is *the science of designing equipment and workspace conditions to meet job demands and human capabilities*. Incorporating ergonomics into the workplace helps to maximize productivity by reducing fatigue and discomfort, and lowering the incidence of repetitive strain injuries. There are three basic principles to consider:

1. Large muscle groups should be used for lifting. This reduces the stress placed on smaller more vulnerable muscles.
2. Assume many different postures during work activities. Maintaining one posture (especially a poor one) for too long causes muscles to fatigue, making them prone to injury.
3. Maintain joints in neutral postures or half way into their range of motion. Working at the extreme of a joints range places unnecessary stress on the joint, increasing the chance of repetitive strain injuries.

The *set up of your workstation* is equally as important as your body position, and can greatly reduce stress on your body. **If you work at a desk:**

- Choose a **desk** that is the appropriate height for you. Ensure items you use frequently are easily accessible to you, ideally within arms reach.
- Adjust the height of your **monitor** so that your eyes are level with the top.
- Adjust your **keyboard** level so that your elbows remain relaxed by your side. When typing do not allow your wrists to sag and rest on the keyboard.
- Place your **mouse** close to you in a comfortable position. Do not grip it too firmly and use your whole arm/shoulder to move it, rather than just your wrist.
- Reduce **eyestrain** by adjusting your workstation to avoid glare from overhead lighting or windows. Rows of lights should be parallel to your workstation, while windows should be perpendicular to your monitor.



Good Working Posture in the Office:

- **Head:** in line with the torso and facing forward
- **Shoulders:** relaxed with arms hanging beside the body
- **Elbows:** close the body, bent 90-120°
- **Hands, wrists, forearms:** forearms parallel to the floor with all joints in a straight line.
- **Back:** appropriate lumbar support when sitting vertical
- **Thighs & hips:** thighs parallel to the floor supported by a well padded seat
- **Knees:** at same height as hips, bent approx. 90°
- **Feet:** fully supported, flat on the floor (or footrest)

Remember to take frequent breaks during the day to stretch your neck, arms, wrists, back and legs. We all know it can be easy to get caught up in your work, set a timer every 30-60 minutes to remind yourself it's time to take a break!

STRESS BUSTING TIPS

For many, stress has become part of our daily lives. Occasional stress can sometimes help to improve our focus or performance; however chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, and other serious health problems. Over time, stress can affect your:

- Immune system: increasing susceptibility to infections;
- Cardiovascular system: leading to high blood pressure, abnormal heart beats (arrhythmia) coronary artery disease;
- Musculoskeletal system: causing neck, shoulder, and low back pain;
- Gastrointestinal system: leading to GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), peptic ulcers;
- Reproductive system: contributing to low fertility, painful menstrual cycles;
- Skin: aggravating such conditions as acne and psoriasis; and
- Psychological well-being: causing anxiety, worry, restlessness, fatigue, and lack of focus.

The following are strategies to help tolerate stress and less the impact stress can have on our health.

- Think Positively: recognize negative thinking patterns and replace them with constructive ones
- “Smell the Roses”: aromatherapy, particularly orange and lavender scents enhance relaxation and reduce anxiety
- Laugh it Off: laughter can help boost the immune system, increase pain tolerance, relieve stress and anxiety, enhance mood, and lower blood pressure
- Build a Support System: loneliness can contribute to stress in both men and women; relationships are key to health and happiness especially for women
- Listen to Music: especially classical music; calming music can help elevate mood and reduce anxiety
- Calm Your Mind: many forms of meditation such as guided imagery or focusing on breath can help to reduce anxiety and depression
- Human Touch: regular massage can help reduce pain, blood, pressure, anxiety, and promote sleep
- Exercise: try relaxing exercise such as tai chi or yoga



There Are Types of Stress?

While everyone has stress, our bodies can respond to it in different ways. Metagenics, a science-based nutraceutical company, has designed a specific stress questionnaire to help determine what type of stress you have. These can include: *occasional, wired, worried, mentally exhausted, tired, and hot*. Based on the results of your questionnaire and your classification of stress, a specific natural supplement can be prescribed to help balance your system and reduce the negative impact of stress on your body. Supplementation along with coping mechanisms and lifestyle strategies can provide you with a natural way to manage the stress in your life.



SLEEP

“Only when one cannot sleep does one know how long the night is.” ~ Chinese Proverb

Sleep is critical to our body's health and is one of our brain's most important functions. It allows our body to recharge and affects our immune and nervous systems, memory, judgment, attention, patience, thinking and reading abilities. Signs of insomnia may include:

- Requiring more than 30 to 45 minutes to fall asleep;
- Waking up multiple times during the night;
- Waking up early and being unable to fall back asleep; and
- Waking up feeling tired.

Many factors can contribute to insomnia or poor sleep:

- Stress or worry about job pressures, family, or illness;
- Side effects of medications;
- Prolonged exposure to television or computers;
- Aches & pains from uncomfortable mattress/pillow; or
- Lack of melatonin (sleep inducing hormone).

Sleep experts recommend developing healthy sleeping behaviours to combat insomnia:

- Go to sleep at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning
- Exercise regularly, but try to avoid heavy activity within 2-3 hours of bed time
- Limit intake of caffeinated beverages especially close to bedtime; for each cup of caffeinated beverage drink an equal amount of water
- Avoid eating late at night as digestion may interfere with sleep
- Keep your bedroom cool and as dark as possible.

Therapies such as acupuncture or massage can help ease anxiety and promote relaxation for some people. Natural supplements such as Valerian, German Chamomile, Hops, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Passionflower, and Melatonin have sedative properties and may be a suitable alternative to sleeping pills. Always consult your physician before taking any supplements especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking other medications that have sedative properties.



MATTRESS FACTS

- A good mattress provides uniform support for your body, allowing the spine to maintain its natural alignment; there should be no gaps between your body and the bed
- Turn your mattress clockwise every few months to minimize body indentations
- If you have back pain, place a board under your mattress for increased support; this however, is not a permanent solution
- It may be time for a new mattress if you are continually waking up uncomfortable

PILLOW TALK

When it comes to pillows, size matters!

- Choose a pillow that allows your head and neck to remain level with your mid and lower spine; when lying on your back, your head & neck should remain level with your upper back
- Choose firm foam materials that press back and support the head
- You may not be getting the proper support if you find yourself sleeping on your side with your arm propped under the pillow

Remember, mattress and pillow selection is a highly personal choice based on support AND comfort! Experiment and choose what is right for YOU!

10 Simple Tips for a Healthy Back!

1. Exercise regularly
2. Follow a healthy diet
3. Maintain good posture
4. Stretch your spine before and after sports
5. Don't overload your backpack or shoulder bag
6. Stretch your legs and back after each hour of sitting
7. Never cradle the phone between your neck and shoulder
8. Sleep on your back or side, not on your stomach
9. Invest in a good chair, pillow, and mattress
10. Have regular spinal check ups



Information in this newsletter adapted from the American Chiropractic Association's Healthy Living series, and the Ontario Chiropractic Association.



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