

# SAFE WORK

**S** SPOT THE HAZARD  
**A** ASSESS THE RISK  
**F** FIND A SAFER WAY  
**E** EVERYDAY

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## Adjusting the Office Chair and Workstation

### Potential hazard

Office workers often sit at their workstations for long periods, day after day. If they do not have their chairs and workstation set up correctly, they may be sitting and using their computer in a manner that could lead to injuries over time.

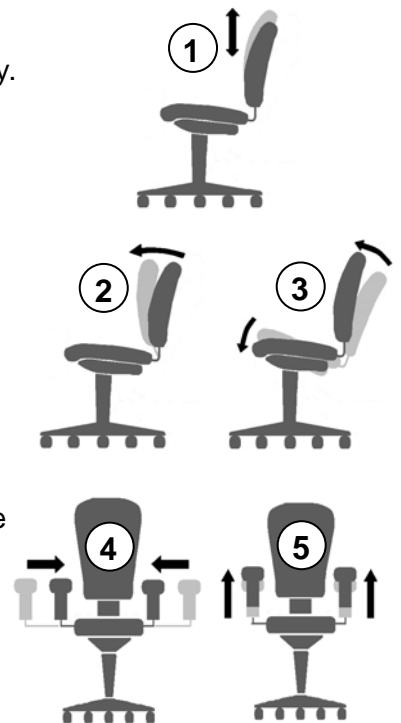
### How to control the hazard

In order to minimize the risk of injury, workers should be equipped with adjustable chairs and workstations, and be trained on how to properly adjust them. Proper adjustment techniques and other considerations are listed below.

#### Adjusting your chair:

Following the tips below will set up your chair in a way that minimizes the risk of injury.

- ① Adjust the height of the lumbar support to the small of the back.
- ② Adjust the back angle so that the worker feels a slight pressure in the small of the back from the lumbar support. This slight pressure will help the workers maintain a good sitting posture.
- ③ Adjust the tilt of the chair so that the seat-pan is flat or tilted slightly forward. If your seat-pan can move forward and back, move it back until there are 2-3 finger widths between the front of the seat and the back of your legs.
- ④ Place the arm rests directly under the shoulders with the elbows held directly at the side of the body.
- ⑤ Adjust the arm rests to a height where the elbows are supported but not pushed up, and the forearms are parallel with the floor.
- ⑥ Adjust the height of the chair:
  - If an adjustable height keyboard tray is available, adjust the chair to a height where the workers feet are comfortably flat on the floor and the knees are bent 90°-110°.
  - If the keyboard is at a fixed height, adjust the chair to a height where the elbows are at the same height as the keyboard. Provide a footrest if this raises the feet off the floor.



#### Adjusting your workstation:

While many people recognize that having a properly set up chair is important in preventing injuries, they often overlook the set-up of their workstation. Adjusting the workstation is very important as well. Tips on adjusting the workstation are on the next page.

(see over)

#### Workplace Safety and Health Division Contact Information:

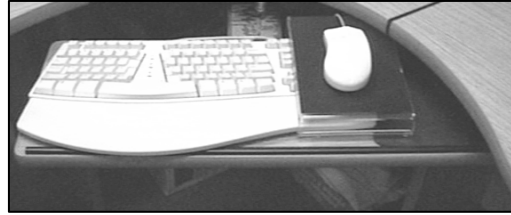
Winnipeg: (204) 945-3446  
Toll-Free: 1-866-888-8186 (Manitoba only)  
24-Hour Emergency Line: (204) 945-0581

Publications/resources available at: [www.safemanitoba.com](http://www.safemanitoba.com)



**Tips for adjusting your workstation:**

- 1 If an adjustable keyboard tray is available, position the keyboard tray at the height of the elbows. If the keyboard height is fixed, raise or lower the chair so that the elbows are at the height of the keyboard.
- 2 Adjust the angle of the keyboard and if available, keyboard tray so the wrists are flat or tilted slightly downward. Be sure to place the feet on the keyboard in the closed position.
- 3 Place the monitor directly in front of the user at about arms length. Large monitors can be placed a bit further away.
- 4 Adjust the height of the monitor:
  - a) If bi-focals or progressive lenses are worn, place the monitor as low as possible, and increase the font size to permit use of the top portion of the glasses.
  - b) For workers without corrective lenses, position the top of the screen at eye level.
- 5 Position the mouse directly beside the keyboard. If there is insufficient space on the tray for the mouse one option is to use a mouse bridge. The above picture shows a mouse bridge, which covers the number pad and positions the mouse directly beside the keyboard. Avoid placing the mouse at a different height from the keyboard.
- 6 Sit close to the keyboard and mouse to reduce forward reach.
- 7 Place the phone at a location which minimizes reaching and twisting. Cradling the phone between the ear and the shoulder can increase the risk of injury. If you often use your phone and computer at the same time, use a hands free system (speaker phone or headset).
- 8 The seated posture is stressful for the body and slouching significantly increases the long-term risk of injury. Taking regular quick breaks from sitting helps reduce the risk.
  - Use regular cues to stand as much as possible, i.e. a ringing phone.
  - Place the printer at a distance to encourage standing and walking.
  - Use good posture at all times, avoid postures which involve twisting or over-reaching since these may cause injuries.
  - Drink a healthy amount of water to encourage regular mini-breaks.

**Additional Considerations:**

In addition to following the tips above for setting up your office chair and workstation, you may want to consider some of the following types of equipment and work practices to further reduce the risk of injuries:

- Split or “Ergonomic” keyboards – these help keep the arms and hands in a straighter, less stressful posture. They may not be appropriate for persons with narrow shoulder width.
- Document holders – if you often need to look at paper documents while at your computer, a document holder in front of (or right beside) your monitor reduces the need to twist your neck.
- Foot rests – these can be helpful when your chair height keeps your feet above ground or if you have lower back pain.
- If you feel pain in your hand, arm, elbow or shoulder of your mouse hand, try using the mouse with your other hand.
- Mouse alternatives – there are numerous mouse types available (ex. vertical or joystick style), that keep the hand and wrist in a more neutral position and reduce the risk of injury.
- Wrist gel pads – these can be used to prevent your wrists from resting on the desk while typing. They should not be used with the mouse, however, as this can lead to repeated side-to-side movement of the wrist.

**Questions?**

Please contact the Workplace Safety and Health Division at 204-945-3446 and ask to speak with an ergonomist. Additional information can be located at:

[http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/risk\\_individual.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/risk_individual.html)

**Reference to legal requirements under workplace safety and health legislation:**

- Musculoskeletal Injuries: Manitoba Regulation 217/2006 Part 8

**Additional workplace safety and health information available at: [www.safemanitoba.com](http://www.safemanitoba.com)**