

## Spot The Safety Violation: Sit up Straight!



What's wrong with how this worker is sitting while working on the computer'



Many workplaces have ergonomics-related safety hazards that can cause repetitive stress or musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs). And although MSIs aren't generally considered serious injuries under the OHS laws, they do account for a high percentage of workplace injuries overall and workers' comp claims.

For example, the worker in this X-ray is hunched over in a posture that places

stress on his back, neck and shoulders. Such poor posture and positioning while working on a computer can lead to carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis and other MSIs.

### Tips for Correct Posture

The OHS laws in all Canadian jurisdictions'either expressly or implicitly'require employers to protect workers from ergonomics-related hazards, even in office spaces. So if your workers spend time at a desk or workstation or in front of a computer, make sure they maintain an ergonomically neutral posture, which is one in which:

- **Hands, wrists and forearms** are straight, in-line and roughly parallel to the floor;
- **Head** is level (or bent slightly forward), facing forward, balanced and in line with the torso;
- **Shoulders** are relaxed;
- **Upper arms** hang normally at the side of the worker's body;
- **Elbows** stay close to the body and are bent between 90° and 120°;
- **Feet** are fully supported by the floor or a footrest if the desk height isn't adjustable and are slightly forward;
- **Back** is fully supported with appropriate lumbar support when the worker is sitting vertically or leaning back slightly;
- **Thighs and hips** are supported by a well-padded seat that's parallel to the floor; and
- **Knees** are about the same height as the hips.

The positioning of the computer screen is also important for preventing MSIs:

- The worker shouldn't be too close to or far from the computer screen'20 to 40 inches is optimal.
- The screen shouldn't be tilted too far left or right. It should be tilted no more than 35° degrees to either side.
- The screen or keyboard also shouldn't be too high or low to use in a neutral posture.

To keep your workers from developing MSIs regardless of the type of work they do, you should:

- Understand employers' legal obligations under the OHS laws
- Identify and assess ergonomics-related hazards
- Implement measures to address those hazards, using these techniques to cut through senior management's resistance and get money for ergonomics improvements
- Use these seven strategies to make your ergonomics program a success.

Go to the Ergonomics Compliance Centre for additional resources, including articles, studies and tools, such as an office ergonomics checklist.