

Have arthritis? Design your office to ease the strain

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Whether your job is remote or takes you to an office, you'll feel better

and offset joint pain by having a workspace that's designed to work for you instead of against you.

The biggest problem isn't sitting itself but holding a single position for long periods often with a posture that causes strain, such as leaning forward, said [Jen Horonjeff](#), an ergonomics and human factors consultant in New York City. (Ergonomics refers to office comfort and efficiency).

"People think the opposite of sitting is standing. Unless you're moving around when you stand up, that's not the case," Horonjeff said in a news release from the Arthritis Foundation. "The real opposite of both sitting or standing still is moving. And moving frequently is what we need to be doing to avoid causing work-related pain, muscle strain and fatigue."

Repetitive tasks that tire the same muscles and being still for long periods can strain the neck, shoulders, back, hands, wrists and legs, according to the foundation.

Move often, the foundation suggests. Get up about every 20 to 30 minutes and walk around. Adjust your position frequently.

"Shifting positions and moving around are the best ways to combat pain, stiffness and fatigue," Horonjeff said.

Here are some of the foundation's other suggestions for setting up a healthy workspace:

The desk

Take a look at your computer monitor. Eyes should be level with the top of the screen. The center should be 15 degrees below your line of sight and approximately an arm's length away. Oversize monitors are an

exception.

Use a laptop riser to bring a laptop to eye level. Get a separate keyboard so you can type at the proper height.

At your desk, sit so your upper back is straight and your shoulders are relaxed. Make sure your shoulders don't creep toward your ears during the day.

Support your arms with adjustable arm rests. Your upper and lower arm should form a 90-degree angle and you should be positioned so you can keep your wrists straight and fingers relaxed.

Your feet should firmly touch the floor. Use a footrest if your feet don't easily reach the floor.

Keep tools you use regularly within arm's reach. This prevents contorting into an awkward position or leaning forward to reach them.

The chair

Your [chair](#) can make a difference in a space that fits you. You may be able to request a workplace accommodation if your office doesn't provide an appropriate chair.

If you're buying a chair, try it first, and try sitting in many chairs.

Select a chair that offers lumbar support. This lets you sit in a natural, neutral posture. You should sit with your bottom at the back of the chair and with your body leaning back, so your spine hugs the lumbar curve of the chair.

Your chair should also swivel and roll, and have a five-point base for

stability and ease of movement.

The chair should also fit you, with at least a 1-inch gap between the edge of the seat and the backs of your knees when sitting back. The seat should be at least an inch wider than your hips and thighs. The chair's back should be wide enough for your back, but without restricting arm movements by being too wide.

With an adjustable chair, you can alter seat height, seat tilt, backrest height and tilt, and armrest positions.

Having a chair with a headrest can reduce neck and shoulder strain.

Using a document holder can raise materials to eye level, so you won't need to bend toward your desk.

Use a headset to avoid cradling a phone. This reduces neck and shoulder strain.

Try an ergonomic keyboard and mouse to keep hands and forearms in a more neutral position. A vertical mouse lets you use it in an upright, neutral position, which can help if you have carpal tunnel syndrome.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more on [carpal tunnel syndrome](#).

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