

HR PRACTICAL INFORMATION

HOW TO ADOPT A GOOD SITTING POSITION

Do you know that a person in an office job spends an average of 8 hours sitting still? Yet doctors, physiotherapists, osteopaths and ergonomists all alert about the consequences of poor posture in the office. Here are some tips to adopt a good sitting position, relieve your back and take care of your health.

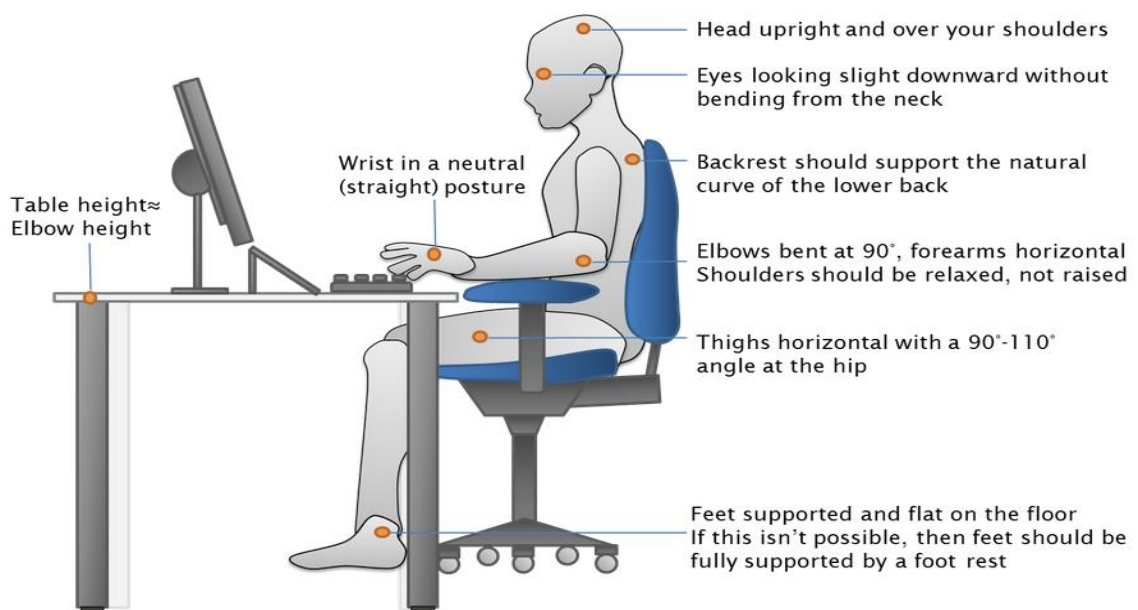
WHY HAVING GOOD POSTURE IN THE OFFICE IS IMPORTANT.

When our body remains in a position for a long time or when it often repeats the same gestures, it tends to adapt to this position or to these gestures. Some muscles tense while others relax and weaken. After a while, these tensions can slightly shift the balance of certain joints and cause pain. Ultimately, this can even lead to relatively serious pathologies: sciatica, joint pinches, premature wear of the joints, even herniated discs... Hence the importance of adopting good posture in the office.

WHAT IS GOOD POSTURE IN THE OFFICE?

First, what is posture? It is the position of the body in space, the way we stand. Good posture is posture that respects the natural positions of our joints and the muscle balance of our body.

A good sitting position, therefore, is a position that allows the main joints of the body to be in a neutral position, a position that does not put the muscles under tension or stretching. To do this, avoid bending or arching your back, bending or stretching your legs too much and bending your hips too much.



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The image below represents the ideal sitting posture, but it should be noted that no posture is ideal indefinitely.

It is important to change your posture and position often by adjusting chair settings and alternating tasks (typing, handwriting, walking and standing) as often as possible. This will ensure good blood circulation and reduce the risk of injury or musculoskeletal disorders¹.

HOW TO ADOPT THE BEST SITTING POSITION POSSIBLE?

- **Keep your back straight**

Be careful to avoid rounding the shoulders forward (for this, you must have your screen at eye level).

- **Adjust your chair so that you have a good sitting position**

Adjust your chair so that when seated, the underside of your elbows are at the height of the desk (or barely higher). Therefore, if you lay your hands flat on your desk with your arms at your sides, your elbows should form roughly a right angle.

Some tips for adjusting your chair



While standing, adjust the height of your chair so that the highest point of the seat is just below your kneecap. It should be possible to set your feet **FIRMLY** on the floor while you are sitting. If you feel pressure near the back of the seat, raise your seat. If you feel pressure near the front of the seat, lower your seat. It is about distributing your weight well.

In sitting position, adjust the height of the backrest so that the lumbar cushion supports the normal curve of the lower back (lumbar curve).

¹ Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) include about fifteen diseases that affect the muscles, tendons and nerves of the limbs and spine. These are multifactorial pathologies with a professional component. **MSDs are currently the most common occupational diseases in industrialized countries.**

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- Position your feet and legs correctly

Check that once seated, you can position your legs and feet properly. Your thighs should form an angle of about 90-100 degrees with your torso, and your calves should form a 90-degree angle with your thighs. Finally, you must be able to lay your feet flat on the ground without your legs being contracted.

When you want to keep a good sitting posture in the office, do not cross your legs or feet. This tends to make one leg work more than the other and can lead to muscle imbalances in the pelvis and back problems because your spinal column may not be properly aligned.

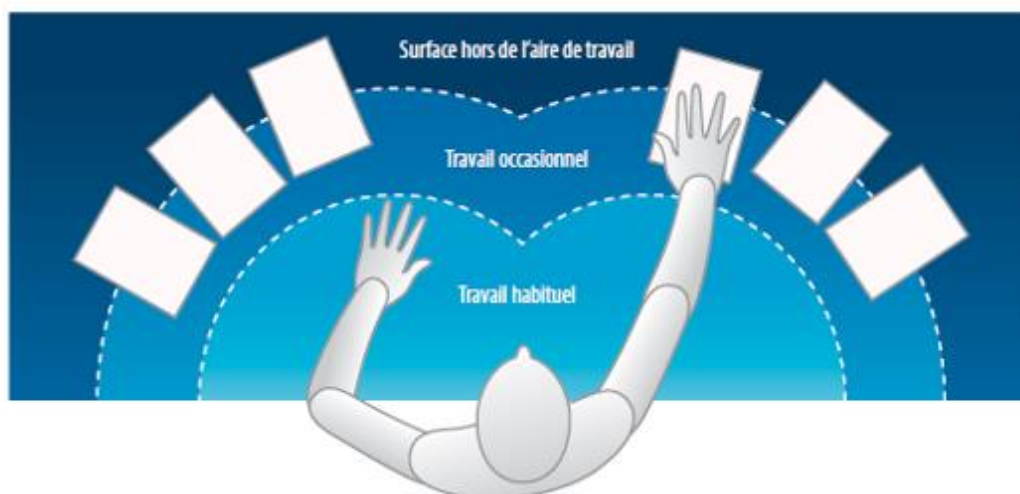
- Position your screen correctly

For an ideal sitting position at work, your screen should be at about your eye level. Make sure the distance between your eyes and the screen is between 50 and 70 cm. You must be able to look at it without bending your head and without having to lower your gaze too much, which tends to bend your back and thus strain the muscles of your upper back. If your screen seems too low, raise it.

AND THE WORK SURFACE?

Your work surface should be at elbow height: the forearms and arms should be at 90 degrees when your arms are relaxed along your body. Lower your seat if necessary.

The objects you use often must be within your reach - a good way to do this is to arrange these objects in a semicircle around you. By keeping objects that you rarely use out of your reach, you will be forced to get up for them. This will stimulate blood circulation and relieve general discomfort.

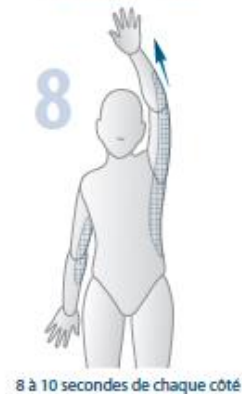
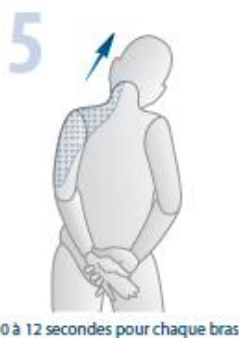


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SOME STRETCHING EXERCISES AT THE COMPUTER AND THE WORKSTATION (4 minutes)

Being seated at the computer for long periods often causes stiffness in the neck and shoulders and can occasionally cause lower back pain. Do the stretches shown below about once every hour during the day or when you feel ankylosed. Make a photocopy of this page and keep it handy. Also, be sure to get up and walk around the office when possible.



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A good sitting position is essential, but keep in mind that the higher the daily sitting time, the shorter the life expectancy. A sedentary lifestyle promotes the development of cardiovascular risk such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity and the complications involved. Our organs also work less efficiently and the increase of the level of inflammation and oxydative stress in the body can cause the development of many diseases such as cancer.

A sedentary lifestyle favors all musculoskeletal, backache, neck and shoulder disorders responsible for a large number of absences from work. Limit time spent without moving. Get up every 2 or 3 hours to relax, walk for 2 to 3 minutes while stretching. For example, make a habit of standing up when you are talking on the phone.

Remember that by making your muscles work, you also bring fresh oxygenated blood to your brain that will release many substances that improve your thinking ability and your mood. When you sit too long, everything slows down, including the activity of your brain!

In public transport, do not rush to take a seat when you only have a few stations. Walk every day at least 30 minutes at a good pace. Walk the escalators, do not take the elevator for two floors, and get off the bus or metro a station before your work or home.

Why not shorten your lunchtime by 10 minutes for a walk before or after?

Still have questions? Do not hesitate to contact Human Resources.

The illustrations come from the Ergonomics Guide: Office Work. Guide to the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Injury, Worksafe, Safe Work and UC Davis Occupational Health Services