



Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust

A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Office Chair Ergonomics

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Overview: Discusses how to use ergonomic best practices to adjust an office chair for best fit.
- Purpose: Refreshes employees about the importance of ergonomics and to encourage them to adjust their own chairs to be more comfortable.
- Preparation:
- Become familiar with the style(s) of office chairs in use. Some chairs may not have some of the adjustable features discussed in this Quick Take. Consulting the owner's manual can help to better understand the chair's adjustable features.
 - Read and become familiar with this quick take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.*
- Handouts: "Your Guide to a Comfortable Workstation" pamphlets. Request pamphlets by contacting MCIT at 1.866.547.6516 or info@mcit.org.

Chair Ergonomics

An office chair that is adjusted to fit you can provide better support and comfort. Over time, sitting in a chair that isn't adjusted to fit you can lead to discomfort, strains or other injuries to muscles and tendons. Once injured, you are much more likely to reinjure the area in the future.

Fortunately, by focusing on how your chair can best fit and support you, you can avoid many of these injuries, so pay careful attention. Your health and safety is important to us; we don't want you to get hurt.

Prevention

One of the most important elements of ergonomics is maintaining a neutral posture. Neutral postures are those that improve natural support while placing minimal stress on your body and joints. Today, we are going to focus on learning how to maintain neutral postures and positions when seated.

[*Instructor prompt:* If conditions allow, consider using an adjustable office chair to demonstrate the following information. Have trainees follow along in brochure.]

Chair Height

- The height of the chair should allow for good support from the floor while pushing the body comfortably into the back rest. If the chair is too high, you may not be able to support yourself fully or utilize the back rest. If you find yourself resting your feet on the legs of the chair or leaning forward so your feet contact the floor, this may be a sign that your chair is too high.
- Your hips should be just slightly higher than your knees.

- When sitting at a supportive height, your forearms should be nearly parallel with the floor when typing or using a mouse. [*Instructor note:* A footrest may be required to offer support if the desk is too high or other options, such as an adjustable keyboard, may help to bring about this neutral posture.]

Chair Back

When positioned correctly, the chair back can give support to your back, shoulders and neck.

- Move the seat back up or down so that the curved lumbar fits the natural curve of your back. [*Instructor note:* some chairs backs are static and have a bar or other device that can be raised or lowered to best fit the lumbar.]
- Adjust the tilt of the back of the chair so it has good contact and is supportive of your back. Typically an angle of 95-110 degrees is most comfortable.
- If the seatback feels loose, try turning the tensioner knob (either located below the seat or to the side with +/- sign,) to the right until supportive tension is felt.

Seat Pan

The seat pan should support most of your upper legs.

- You should be able to reach and fully rest against the seat back. There should be typically 1 to 2 inches of space between the front of the seat and the back of your knees.
- Your seat pan should typically be parallel with the floor. If you feel you are sliding out of the chair, it could be that the seat is tilted toward the floor and may need to be adjusted.

Arm Rests

- The arm rests should be positioned to be the same height. They should not be too high, and shoulders should not be pushed up. If positioned too low, the body may lean one way or another to find the support of a rest. The height should be comfortable.
- Arm rests should also not be at a height that prevents the chair from being pulled in to a comfortable distance from the edge of the desk. [*Instructor note:* This is relatively common when employees position equipment in the corner of the desk, and the arm rests contact the desk preventing the employee from sitting close, thereby causing the employee to sit forward, lean or reach. In these cases, the arm rests can be removed, lowered to beneath the desk height, or the equipment moved to one side of the desk rather than in the corner.]

Although neutral postures are ideal, it is equally important to vary postures throughout the day. Remember to stand and stretch or briefly move around throughout the day. [*Instructor Prompt:* Lead class in a series of stretches from the back of the “Your Guide to a Comfortable Workstation” pamphlet.]

Discussion Question

What do you do if the chair does not adjust or is broken?

Additional Activity

Have employees go back to their workstations and adjust their chairs as needed.

Office Chair Ergonomics

Session Planning and Review

Trainer

Training Date

Department(s)

TRAINING GOALS

- Employees are aware of and know the best ergonomic practices when adjusting their office chair.

RESOURCES

- Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust, “Your Guide to a Comfortable Workstation” pamphlet: request copies at no cost from MCIT at **1.866.547.6516** or info@mcit.org.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Computer Workstations E-tool: [OSHA.gov](https://www.osha.gov)

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

