Keeping Your Joints Healthy and Pain Free at the Computer

by BRENDA VANTA

Easing RA Joint Pain at the Computer

How many hours do you spend in front of your computer? According to a 2013 study, the average American spends 11 hours a day with electronic media, including computers, TV, game consoles, radio and phones. Many people spend 8 hours daily working in front of the computer every day. Let's look at RA joint pain and how you can avoid the discomfort.

Standing in the same position for so long surely affects your joints, especially if you have rheumatoid arthritis. That is why it is important to understand how ergonomic products work and how to choose them.

Ergonomics is the science that covers different aspects of a job, from physical stresses that put pressure on your joints and muscles (repetitive tasks like typing, sitting for a long time in a chair, holding a telephone to your ear with your shoulder), to environmental factors (such as air quality, excessive noise, improper lightening). A variety of ergonomic devices are now available for employees who spend most days in front of the screen.

General Tips

Take a short one-two-minute break every half an hour and move your joints – get up, walk around and stretch your muscles. If your chair is too high and you don’t reach the floor with your feet, get a footrest.

Computer Screen

Pay attention to your computer screen. Your eyes should be level with the top of the screen (unless you use oversized monitors). If the screen is too low, special monitor blocks can be added underneath the computer to raise the screen. The distance between your body and the computer should be roughly the length of your arm.

Document holders are a great addition since they raise the materials (i.e., papers, folders) to eye level, so you don’t have to bend your neck constantly toward the desk.

Tools for Your Arms

Some ergonomic tools were specifically designed to protect your wrist. For example, wrist rests and forearm supports are usually made of foam and keep your arm and hand comfortable while typing.

The newest mice are even more comfortable – for example, the “contour” mouse is designed to perfectly fit your hand and enforce good mousing posture. They come in different sizes, for left or right hand, etc.

Devices to Protect Your Eyes

Antiglare screens protect your eyes from excessive light, and you should use them if you wear glasses but don’t have anti-glare lenses. If the screen’s light is too strong, you may find yourself sitting in uncomfortable positions at the desk.

Ergonomic Chairs and Pillows

The chair is also important. If it is old and does not support your lower back you should replace it as soon as you can.

Your chair should provide excellent back support, and be adjustable (height, tilt). Additional items such as thin attachable back pillows or ObusForme back support can further be used to make that chair more comfortable.

Where Can You Find Them?

If you are an employee, you have to request these ergonomic devices from your employer (sometimes only basic devices are covered). If you need to buy them, check out stores like Staples or Wal-Mart.