

# Workplace Safety e-book

**This** e-book provides ergonomic information for employees to prevent injury, at home or at work.

## Contents:

- Preventing Eye & Neck Strain
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Material Handling - Move The Load Safely
- Tips for Healthy Standing, Sitting or Lying Down
- Biomechanics



**LifeResources - Member Assistance Program** provides you, your dependents, and household members assistance in dealing with a variety of personal and professional issues. The program's confidential counseling, information, and referral services are provided at no cost to employees. Call **1.800.759.8122** to speak with a specialist about these and other related services.

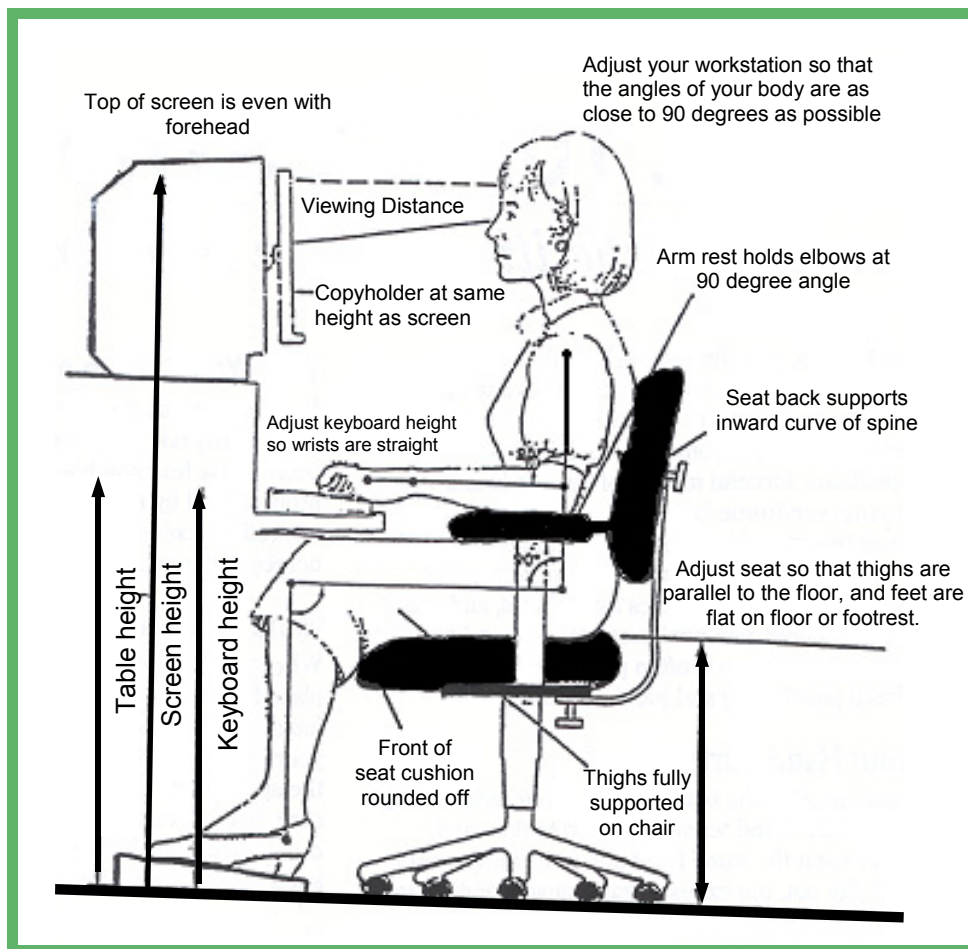
# ADJUST YOUR WORK STATION

## Preventing Eye & Neck Strain

Computers can perform many of the repetitious and tedious tasks that were once done by hand. But if you spend most of your working hours at a computer terminal, you may find you get minor muscle or backaches and a stiff neck. Fortunately, there are ways to prevent these aches and pains - you can help yourself by developing good work habits.

### Are You Sitting Pretty?

- Be aware of your posture at all times and guard against slumping shoulders or a slouching spine. To check yourself, draw an imaginary line from your ear, past your shoulder to your hip. A straight line will help keep your back in shape.
- Remember to shift your position frequently to eliminate strain. Try taking a brief walk around the office or doing some simple stretching exercises to release the muscle tension caused by sitting.
- Use document holders or page display devices to keep your pages in an upright position.



### Making Your Chair & Computer Work Together

- Slide your chair under your desk or workstation so that you don't have to lean into your work.
- Your knees should be slightly lower than your hips.
- Avoid crossing your legs and keep your feet flat on the floor.

LifeResources - Member Assistance Program

1.800.759.8122

**HealthTrust**



HEALTH RESOURCES

# CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

## Preventing Repetitive Motion Problems

### Helpful Resources

#### Related websites

- [www.ArthritisInsight.com](http://www.ArthritisInsight.com)
- [www.yourmedicalsourc.com](http://www.yourmedicalsourc.com)
- [www.certifiedpst.com](http://www.certifiedpst.com)
- [www.sorehand.com](http://www.sorehand.com)
- [www.docortho.com](http://www.docortho.com)
- [www.WristPainCentral.com](http://www.WristPainCentral.com)

#### Books

- Conquering Carpal Tunnel Syndrome And Other Repetitive Strain Injuries by Sharon J. Butler & Jacqueline Entwistle Freeman (Illustrator) 1996.
- End Your Carpal Tunnel Pain Without Surgery by Kate Montgomery 1998.
- Overcoming Repetitive Motion Injuries the Rossiter Way by Richard H. Rossiter & Sue MacDonald 1999.
- Repetitive Strain Injury: A Computer User's Guide by Emil Pascarelli & Deborah Quilter 1994.

**Note: Audio & Book versions of these resources are available at your public library or local bookstore.**

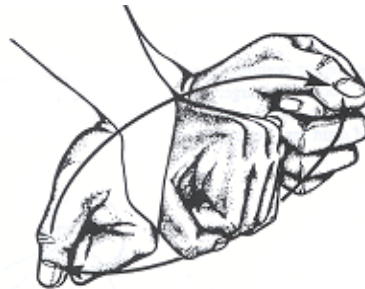
**Important Notice:** Information in this flyer is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns contact LifeResources - Member Assistance Program. LifeResources - Member Assistance Program is not responsible for the content of the materials provided on the Internet.

#### Why Your Hand Hurts

The carpal tunnel is the bony cavity in your wrist through which your nerves and tendons extend to the hand. When you repeat the same hand and wrist movements day in and day out, the excess strain causes tendons to swell and press on the main nerve of the hand. This persistent irritation of the nerve can result in pain, numbness, and dysfunction not only in the hands and wrists, but possibly up to the forearm and elbow as well.

#### What You Can Do About It

If you are at risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome, why not try to prevent the condition before it occurs? By learning how to position your hands properly and by exercising your hands regularly, you can relieve excess pressure on your tendons and prevent unnecessary pain and disability.

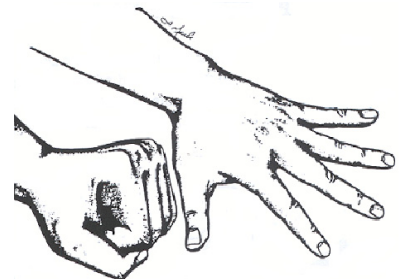


#### Wrist Rotation

Make a fist and rotate your entire hand (from the wrist) in one direction. Repeat 15 times. Switch directions and repeat 15 times. Then release your hands, and with fingers extended, do the same rotations.

#### Hand Stretch

Make a fist, then extend your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for about 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat the entire sequence 5-10 times until hands and fingers feel relaxed.



**LifeResources - Member Assistance Program**  
**1.800.759.8122**

**HealthTrust**



**HEALTH RESOURCES**

# SITTING, STANDING OR LYING DOWN

## Make It Easy On Your Spine

When we are sitting, standing or lying down, the position of our spine can either help or hurt our back. Even a slightly strained position of the spine, when held for any length of time, can cause injuries. Observing a few basic rules of spinal positioning can make a great difference in your back's long-term health.

### Good Sitting Posture

The basic principle of good sitting posture is to maintain the natural curves of the back. Without proper support, it is easy to slump, rounding the lower back and losing the lumbar (lower back) curve.

- Your back likes a straight chair, with the support for the lower spinal curve. You may need to use a small, hard cushion or rolled up towel to maintain the proper curve.
- Check the seat's height. If the seat is not adjustable, you may need a small footrest. Also, the seat should be flat or tilted forward so your knees are slightly lower than your hips.
- When leaning forward to work at a desk, bend from your hips. Keep your neck and back in as straight a line as possible. As you move on the chair seat, try to transfer your weight through your buttocks instead of your thighs.



### Standing Without Strain

Standing for long periods of time tires the muscles in the hips, lower back and abdomen. This fatigue tends to pull your pelvis forward and strain the lower back muscles. Try these suggestions for relieving the strain.

- Use a small footstool. Alternate resting one foot on the stool every few minutes. It keeps the blood flowing and the back's curvature intact.
- Keep your knees flexed - don't lock them. Do a little bounce now and then to keep the spine flexible and relaxed.

### Sleeping With A Curved Spine

A good night's sleep starts with what you put your spine on. Your spine's worst sleep thief is a squishy, lumpy mattress. Use a firm mattress. A three-quarter inch piece of plywood under your mattress will make it even firmer.

- The best position for sleeping is to lie on your side with your hips and knees bent toward your chest and your head on a small, firm pillow.
- A small pillow between your knees maintains leg circulation and proper spinal alignment.
- If you must sleep on your back, support your knees with a pillow and keep your neck elongated (not crunched forward on a big pillow).



### You Are The Key

Understanding the causes of back pain is the key to controlling it. Learn which relaxation techniques work best for you, consult with your health care professional to develop an exercise program and enjoy back health for life.

LifeResources - Member Assistance Program

1.800.759.8122

**HealthTrust**



HEALTH RESOURCES

# MATERIAL HANDLING

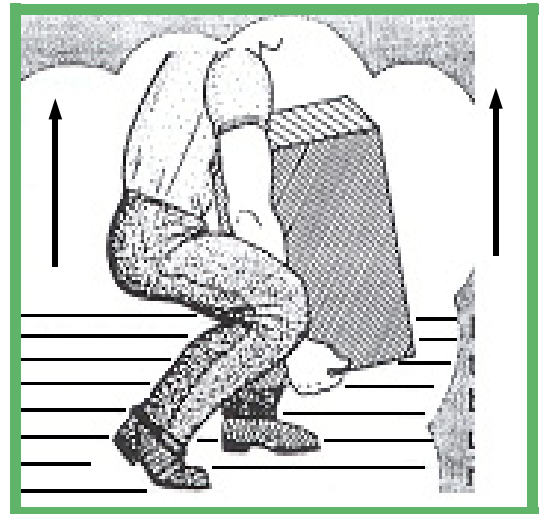
## Move The Load Safely

Those of us whose jobs require material handling, may already know about safe lifting techniques. But safe lifting is only one aspect of material handling; transporting the load safely is the other. How you move or carry and put down the load is just as important as how you pick it up. The following tips can help you move the load safely and protect your back from stress, strain, and potential injury.

### Safe Lifting

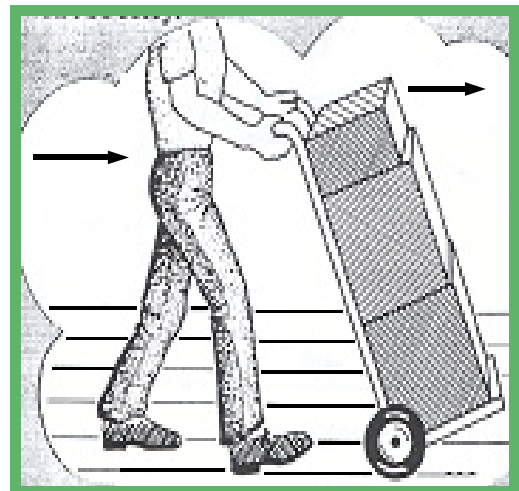
Safe lifting means keeping your back aligned and balanced when lifting. Most standard loads under 25 pounds can be lifted and carried safely by following these steps:

- Begin by bending from the knees (not the waist), tucking your pelvis and tightening your stomach muscles.
- Hug the load close to you, and gradually lift yourself up using the strong muscles in your legs.
- When carrying the object, be sure not to twist or bend.
- Then, bend at the knees and slowly slide the load down your body until you can comfortably put the load down.



### Mechanical Aids

Not all loads can (or should) be lifted by you or your coworkers. Carts, bins, hand trucks, dollies, and fork lifts are all mechanical aids that can help transport a load without putting undue strain on your back. Push-carts and bins can be used for light, awkward loads, while hand trucks and fork-lifts can help move heavier, stackable material. When using mechanical aids, be sure that the load is secured in place before moving, and be sure to push the device rather than pulling it.



LifeResources - Member Assistance Program

1.800.759.8122

HealthTrust



HEALTH RESOURCES

# BIOMECHANICS

## The Relationship Between Posture & Movement

Biomechanics, or body mechanics, simply means the relationship between your posture and your movement. Good biomechanics is using your body so that you avoid putting undue pressure on your muscles, bones, joints, ligaments and, in particular, your spinal discs. Biomechanics starts with maintaining your spine's three natural curves in their neutral alignment.

### Tuning Up Your Body Mechanics

Since you are in charge of your body's posture and activity, you can help correct some of its mechanical problems by observing some basic principles of positioning and movement. Watch yourself throughout the day, room to room, activity to activity. What is comfortable for your back? What isn't? Every spine is different. You are the expert on yours, but following some general guidelines will help.

### Rules To Move By

Observe these basic principles of posture and movement. They will protect your spine as you go through your daily activities.



#### Give Yourself A Lot of Support

Spread your feet at least as far apart as your shoulder width. This adds stability and reduces the stress on your muscles. Distribute your weight evenly throughout the soles of both feet. Whatever you're doing, always feel firmly planted, with your center of gravity in your abdominal cavity.



#### Bend From The Knees

Never bend from your waist - that puts tremendous pressure on your vertebrae. When you bend from your knees, the legs serve as a shock absorber for the body. Slightly bending the knees allows the pelvis to find its balance over the hips. Locked knees tighten the hamstring muscles and lock the pelvis into an unbalanced position. When the knees are bent, any weight comes first into the thighs and hips instead of the spine.



#### Tighten Your Abdominal Muscles

The abdominal cavity, our center of gravity, consists of the abdominal muscles in front, the diaphragm and ribs above and the pelvic floor below. By pulling the abdominal muscles back and up toward the spine, curling the tailbone under slightly, you'll create a pressure in the abdomen that helps share the loads placed upon the spine.



#### Keep Your Spine In Balance

A balanced back, with its normal curvature, keeps the spinal muscles active so they can share the load placed on the bones, ligaments and discs. If you balance your shoulders and chest over the lower spine, you lessen the force placed on it.

LifeResources - Member Assistance Program

1.800.759.8122

HealthTrust



HEALTH RESOURCES