

# Workplace Safety Bucknell

## Newsletter

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### Inside this issue:

Workplace Ergonomics	1
Understanding Ergonomics	1
Essential Exercise	2
Wellness Fair	2

### About the Workplace Safety Committee

The Bucknell Workplace Safety Committee has prepared this newsletter to provide safety and health-related information to our colleagues.

We welcome your safety concerns, questions and suggestions. Please address these to:

[safetyworks@bucknell.edu](mailto:safetyworks@bucknell.edu)

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## Workplace Ergonomics: Back Safety in Your Office

Most of us spend at least 25% of our time at work any given week. It is imperative that we take control of our health while at work. For those of us who sit at our desks the majority of the time, there are extra precautions we can heed while at work.

Avoid static posture while sitting in your office chair. Prolonged, static posture is not good for your back and is a common contributor to back problems and muscle strain. In general, moving about and stretching on a regular basis throughout the day will help keep your joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons loose which will ultimately assist you with comfort, relaxation and productivity throughout the workday.

Ten tips for improving posture and ergonomics for people who sit for most of the workday.

1. Know the warning signs of back pain caused by poor ergonomics and posture (pain is worse at certain times of the day or week; pain starts in neck and moves downwards into upper back, lower back and/or extremities; pain goes away after switching positions; pain experienced with a new job, chair or car; pain that comes and goes for months).
2. Get up and move.
3. Keep the body in alignment while sitting in an office chair and while sitting.
4. Use posture-friendly props and ergonomic office chairs when sitting.
5. Increase awareness of posture and ergonomics in everyday settings.
6. Use exercise to help prevent injury and promote good posture.
7. Wear supportive footwear when standing.
8. Remember good posture and ergonomics when in motion.
9. Create ergonomic physical environments and workspaces, such as for sitting in an office chair at a computer.
10. Avoid overprotecting posture.

Source: Spine Health. Dr. John Triano, DC, PhD & Kelly Andrews, DC (July, 2005)



## Understanding Ergonomics

The word ergonomics existed before the Civil War, yet it is only recently that it has come into extensive use. It means “the science of work” - it explores the effect that our daily duties have on our body. Ergonomists agree on one key point: our bodies are only designed to stand and lie down—they are not designed to sit. So how can you sit, pain-free, at a desk for 35 hours a week? Here are some tips.

*Seek neutrality*—When typing, don’t bend your wrists unnecessarily upward or downward. Ideally, there should be no bending from your elbow to the tips of your fingers. Your head should not be bent when looking at your monitor. Avoid leaning forward.

*Ensure that your chair supports your body*—Your feet should be flat on the floor. If you sit at a comfortable typing height, but your feet can’t reach the floor, you may need a foot rest. The back cushion on your chair should support your lumbar (lower back). Your shoulders should be

(continued on page 2)

**Don't miss the Spring 2006  
Wellness Fair  
March 2nd  
11:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.  
in Larison Dining Hall**

*This fair will focus on the physical wellness dimension. Area businesses, organizations, clubs and campus offices will have booths, exhibits, demonstrations and discuss services available from their respective offices. This is a time to take control of your health and become more aware of areas you can control through your lifestyle habits.*

#### Available from our Lending Library:

##### Videos:

- ✓ *Fire Safety—Everyone's Job*—13 minutes
- ✓ *Safe Lifting and Carrying*—12 minutes
- ✓ *Drive Safely*—12 minutes

##### Handbooks:

- ✓ *Slips, Trips and Falls*
- ✓ *Safe Winter Driving*

Library will be continually updated. Please call x73337 for more information.

Visit the General Counsel's website to view the previous Workplace Safety newsletters.

Essential Exercise article provided by Parlay International.

relaxed. Armrests should support your arms and/or elbows. If you avoid using armrests, your wrists may support your entire arms instead. Doing so may result in painful consequences.

**Keyboard trays are not a cure-all**—These may work wonderfully for some people, but for taller people, the trays can get in the way of their knees. If you can't use a keyboard tray, ensure that your mouse is at the same height as your keyboard.

**Keep your work directly in front of you**—Align your keyboard tray with the monitor. Ensure that the document you are typing from is in your sight line. Avoid turning your neck to see the document.

Remember that no two bodies are exactly alike. A solution that feels good to a co-worker may not be a good fit for you. Understanding and practicing the tips above will help ensure that you are comfortable while working.

Submitted by Don Krech  
Director of Procurement Services

## Essential Exercise

An appropriate exercise program can help you maintain the flexibility and strength you need to maintain your back health. It can also help heal and rehabilitate many problems related to the muscles and joints that support your back. Keeping your back, leg and abdominal muscles strong and flexible can reduce your risk of back strains and sprains. Follow a basic back care program that includes exercise, proper posture and good biomechanics.

### Exercise for Back Health

Talk to your healthcare provider about a regular program of exercises to build and maintain a healthy back and body. Muscle weakness can put unnatural demands on the ligaments and tissues of your spine. And immobility causes more pain and risk of injury than moving about.

Your program should start with gentle stretching exercises to warm up your muscles and prevent injury.

Be sure to include strengthening exercises for your back, leg and abdominal muscles and aerobic exercises to increase the flow of oxygen-rich blood

throughout your system.

Exercise to lose weight. A pot belly can change the curvature of your back, pulling your backbone forward, stressing muscles and ligaments and putting pressure on your discs.

### Exercise and Muscle Tension

Regular exercise can help reduce tension. Tense, contracted muscles can contribute to many different kinds of back, hip and neck problems. Excess tension can cause muscles to become more rigid and more susceptible to strains and tears. Tension can also throw off the alignment of your joints.



### Elements of a Successful Exercise Program

- Wear comfortable clothing that doesn't restrict your movement.
- Use a pad or rug for floor exercises.
- Keep your movements long, slow and gentle.
- Avoid holding your breath.
- Breathe through your nose.
- Inhale when you lengthen or stretch your body.
- Exhale when you exert, curl or fold your body.
- Pay attention to what you're doing.
- Listen to your body's signals. If you feel pain, ease up.
- Exercise at the same time every day, if you can.
- Create a pleasant and quiet exercise environment that has plenty of fresh air.