

# Office Ergonomics

## Office Ergonomics - The Modern Office

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## What is themakes a modern office different from the traditional one?

Office design remained virtually unchanged since the introduction of the typewriter around the turn of the twentieth century up until the mid to late 1970s. The use of computer technologies such as the Wang Word Processing System started in the mid 1970s. This was the beginning of a period of rapid changes in office technology. Personal computers in the early 1980s became the main tool for office workers and continue to transform offices at an ever-increasing pace. And it's not over yet. Current technologies such as tablets, phones, and touch screens are evolving the workplace once more.

The COVID-19 pandemic placed restrictions on workplaces in 2020, with many traditional offices adjusting to working remotely in home-based settings. This shift of working environment came with different ergonomic challenges and solutions.

All changes in the office environment were and still are driven by advances in technology. The overwhelming impact of computers on office work has resulted in redesigning the office around, if not for, the computer. In many instances the computers and remote access technologies have changed not only the shape of the office and the way office work is done, but it has also affected even the lifestyle of workers.

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## Do computers contribute to health problems among their users?

Like many other innovations, computers generated a great deal of resistance at first. People raised concerns about the effects of radiation on everything from their eyes, to their neck, shoulders, arms and back, even to their reproductive fertility and pregnancy outcome. Headaches, eyestrain, muscular tension, and suspicious clusters of miscarriages were widely reported. However, studies which have addressed these concerns have failed to prove that any measurable radiation, no matter how minimal, has been responsible for any of the adverse effects reported. In addition, current flat screen monitors use different technology and as such, reduce radiation as a concern.

Nevertheless, one cannot discount the increasing numbers of dissatisfied and/or injured office workers: their discomfort and health problems are very real. There is very little doubt that working with computers (with emphasis on the actual work and not the computers themselves) causes or heavily contributes to these problems.

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## Why has ergonomics for computer users become so important?

The number of people working with computers and related technology is ever growing. What is even more alarming is the high number of complaints about discomforts and injuries. Office ergonomics considers many elements, including seating, workstation, use of computing devices, and job design. Prevention of injuries through worker participation, education, and ergonomic programs has become essential.

Other documents listed in the [Office Ergonomics](#) section of OSH Answers discuss the hazards of working in computerized offices as well as how to prevent the resulting discomfort and injuries.

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