

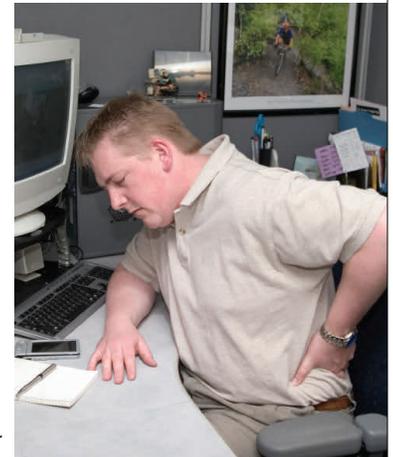
Sitting At Your Desk- Tips to a Healthy Workstation

By Peter Nowak

A significant percentage of employees at Tufts may spend a large portion of their days sitting at the workstation they got when they first arrived at the University. One of my responsibilities in my position is to conduct New Employee Orientation on a by-weekly basis on the Medford Campus. I usually ask a couple of questions to the participants when I begin "How many of you will be on a computer for more than 4-6 hours per day?" Usually at least a few people respond by raising their hands; if it's a larger group it's not uncommon to have 10-12 people admit that they will. The next question, "Has anyone ever had an ergonomic concern in the past?" Again, a couple people will almost always raise their hands. I do not do this to single the new employees out. I bring this up to show that these kinds of issues can be fairly common. The issues that can arise from sitting at a computer workstation

may occur in several different ways. Improper seating, desk height, lighting, keyboard placement and height, and size of the monitor can all contribute to ergonomic concerns. The biggest factor that contributes to individuals developing problems in their office space is being stationary for too long. Sitting for hours on end without getting up and stretching can lead to joint stiffness, lower back pain and other symptoms. If you know you will need to be working for over 2 hours in the same spot, get in the habit of standing up and move around on a regular basis, even if it's only for a few minutes. This will allow your muscles and tendons a chance to relax and reduce the risk of getting some kind of injury. Another concern for working safely at your workstation has to do with eye strain. Our eyes all function at varying degrees of efficiency. Some people need corrective lenses, some have nearly perfect vision. One thing

we all have in common is that if we spend too much time looking at something our eyes can become tired, maybe dry out, and potentially lead to headaches. This is very much true of computer work. Just as it holds for sitting too long, resting your eyes is very much a part of your overall health working for hours at a time. Simply closing your eyes and covering them with your hands for 2 minutes can reduce eye strain. Turn off an over head light and use task lighting if possible. If outside light is coming in from behind your workstation, it is often a good idea to use shades or blinds to dim or reduce the amount. Frequent eye strain can also cause your vision to worsen. If you have problems while working at a computer and they continue for a while in addition to the steps I have outlined, it would be very prudent to seek advice from an eye doctor. In previous TEHS newsletter articles, as well as on our website, I have discussed the



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proper set up for a safe and comfortable workstation. TEHS does offer workstation evaluations upon request, and additional information can be found on the TEHS website; see link <http://publicsafety.tufts.edu/ehs/ergonomics/>.

Protecting the Public Health at Tufts

By Stephen Larson

For many students and some faculty and staff, Tufts University is a place to live. For these individuals, the term Tufts community means a place to sleep, eat, engage in recreational activities and in general be part of neighborhood. Like any town, the Tufts town has a public health program to protect the health of its citizens and promote good health. The Tufts public health program includes the services and activities

of many professionals show share the common goal of protecting the health of all Tufts citizens. These professionals may be found in many departments at Tufts: Facilities Services, Dining Services, Office of Residential Life and Learning, Health Services, Physical Education, Student Services, Public and Environmental Safety. The staffs of Public and Environmental Safety and Student Health Services constantly monitor the overall health of the student population and are alert to unusual patterns of illness and injury. Potential threats to health are anticipated, investigated and where necessary actions taken to minimize or where possible eliminate the threat. However, most protective actions require the participation of all students. For example, pests such as cockroaches and bedbugs are a constant threat in an urban environment but can be effectively con-

trolled if everyone follows simple cleaning and disposal practices. Hence a significant part of the public health program distributing useful information to all in a timely way to alert everyone of a potential or developing problem and actions that can be taken to control that problem. For example, the campus community was recently alerted to West Nile Virus disease and how it is spread and controlled. The Tufts public health program monitors the following factors that contribute to a safe and healthful campus:-providing safe drinking water

- ⇒encouraging the operation of safe recreational facilities
- ⇒monitoring the community noise levels
- ⇒providing safe food
- ⇒providing safety and health education services to students
- ⇒implementing coordinated and effective actions in the event of a public health emergency
- ⇒partnering with Medford, Somerville, Boston and Grafton public health departments before and during public health incidents

At Tufts, providing a safe and healthful living environment is the product of the efforts of many individuals on a daily basis collaborating for the benefit of all.

- ⇒storing and disposing of solid wastes
- ⇒operating an effective sewer system
- ⇒providing pest monitoring and control services



New students learning about health and safety at Tufts University