

Laboratory Workstation Setup and Use Tips



Overview

Below are some tips to help you rearrange your workstation for an optimal ergonomic setup, and some tips on how to perform laboratory tasks with ergonomics in mind. These are just **guidelines**, not requirements to how your workstation should be set up. This information is not meant as a full replacement for an in-person ergonomics assessment, but rather a guide to setting up your workstation. For more information, feel free to set up an ergonomic assessment [here](#), or contact Environmental, Health, and Safety at 646-962-7233.

Laboratory Bench and General Work

- Perform work with elbows in a neutral position, shoulders relaxed, and back in a neutral position (i.e., not hunching over).
- Reposition frequently used tools and supplies approximately 18" from your typical work position, and move tools used less often away from the immediate work area.
- Use anti-fatigue mats or footrests if standing for an extended period of time.
- Position your wrists so that they are not resting on the work surface and you are not putting pressure on your wrists. Keep your wrists elevated during bench work.
- Use a chair in the laboratory to alternate between sitting and standing positions.
- Use comfortable shoes that are suitable for standing for long periods of time.
- Take 'micro-breaks' for at least five minutes every hour that involve getting up from a seated position, and take your hands away from laboratory work during these breaks.

Laboratory Chair

- Adjust the chair so you can work with your elbows and shoulders relaxed and in a neutral position.
- Utilize the footing on the laboratory chair while seated.
- Adjust the back of the chair so that the lower back is properly supported.
- If possible, sit in a location on the bench with bench cutouts to allow for knees to have enough room under the bench while seated.

Finer Tasks

- Utilize a lab chair when performing tasks that require precision or close inspection.
- When purchasing or selecting supplies or tools, choose those that best fit your hands.
- Clean and maintain equipment to ensure that it remains in correct working order.
- Periodically switch hands while performing fine tasks to reduce fatigue.

Pipetting

- If present in your lab, use automated or multi-channel pipettes.
- Limit pipette use to 4 hours per day. If more pipetting is needed, obtain assistance to reduce your workload.
- Use pipettes with arms relaxed and wrists and shoulders in a neutral position.

Microscopy

- Move the microscope to a position where you do not have to bend excessively to use it, and you can use it comfortably without straining.
- Position the eyepiece to a setting where neck strain is minimized.
- Every thirty minutes, your eyes should move away from the microscope. Focus on something across the room for at least 30 seconds.

