Clover Safe

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources
4-H Youth Development Program

#40 COMPUTER ERGONOMICS AWARENESS

Photographs Courtesy of the California 4-H Computer Corps

Ergonomics includes assessing how tasks are performed in order to prevent fatigue and physical stresses that can result in temporary or permanent injuries. Performing tasks at a computer involves repeating the same types of motions over and over again. These types of repetitive motions put stress on muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. Prolonged repetitive motion stress can result in repetitive motion injuries. In addition, continuous sitting at a computer can cause pressure on the discs between the vertebra of the back and pooling of blood in the legs. This Clover Safe provides information to reduce the potential for repetitive motion injuries and increase comfort while sitting for long periods of time.

Recommended Computer Use Practices

- Adjust chair height so that feet are flat on the floor or footrest at about shoulder width.
- Sit straight in chair with lower back firmly supported against the backrest. The upper back should be lightly touching the backrest.
- Position the computer monitor so it is at a distance of about 24 inches from the user and away from lighting that causes screen glare.
- The computer monitor should be located in front of the keyboard and user.
- The top of the computer monitor screen should be at eye level when the user is sitting upright. Users that wear bifocals should position the computer screen slightly lower.
- The keyboard should be located close to the computer user and at a height whereby the user's shoulders remain relaxed and forearms are parallel to the floor. The bottom of the user's elbows should be at the same height as the keyboard.
- The mouse should be located adjacent to the keyboard on the same surface.
- Movement of a mouse should alternately take place from the both the shoulder and wrist.
- When typing, the wrists should remain straight. If necessary, use a padded wrist rest to maintain a straight wrist position.
- While typing, fingers, hands, wrists, arms, and shoulders should be relaxed.
- Locate work materials in front of the computer user. If necessary, employ a document holder to position work materials in front of the user.
- Frequently change body positions and take short stretch breaks every 30 minutes.
- Rest the eyes hourly by looking away from the monitor and focusing on distant objects.
- Intersperse other types of activities with computer typing tasks, especially those that allow the computer user to leave their chair and stand or walk.

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Additional EH&S information may be accessed at the ANR Web Site at http://safety.ucanr.edu