Ergonomics and Manual Handling

06.01.02

– Ergonomics

The chair >

A fully adjustable chair is a key element in good workstation design. This information bulletin describes the best method for adjusting your chair and will help you to get the most from its functions.

Adjusting the chair

When adjusting your chair please refer to any instructions that are provided with the chair or have someone show you how to adjust it and use the controls. If there is no one available to assist you, work through this checklist with another person and observe each other's postures and position of the body. Also, remember to try and avoid sitting for long periods of time. Some form of break from sitting every 30 minutes is helpful. Even getting up for 20 to 30 seconds to go to a printer or standing while talking on the telephone will provide some relief.

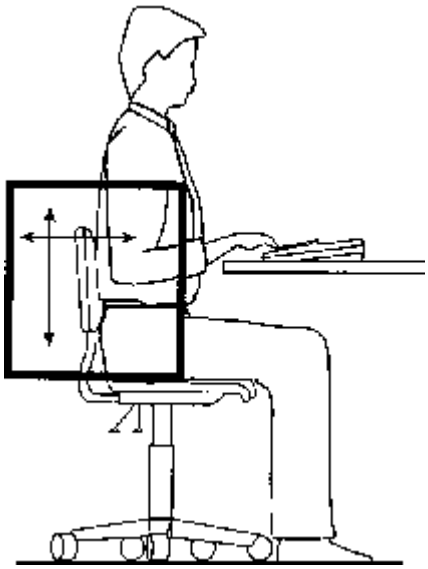

Figure 1: Align seat to thigh and lower leg positions

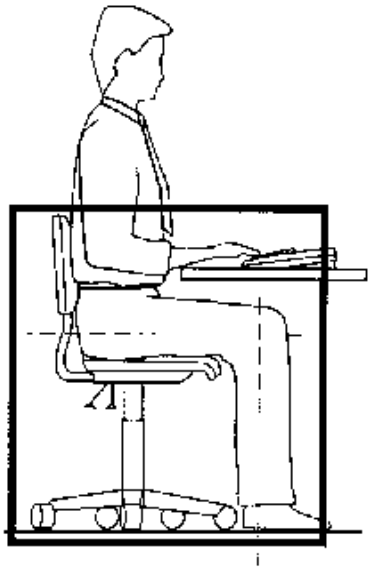

Figure 2: Adjust the height forward/backward back rest tilt position

Seat

Height

Adjust chair height so the feet are comfortably flat on the floor, the thighs are approximately horizontal and the lower legs approximately vertical. Low heeled shoes will improve comfort of the legs with the chair at this height. See Figure 1.

Tilt (if available)

Set to horizontal initially, although you may wish to adjust the tilt slightly forward to suit your comfort.

Back support

Height

Start by raising the backrest to its maximum height. Then sit in the chair and check the fit of the backrest to the curve of the lower back. If not comfortable, lower the height by several centimetres and try this position. See Figure 2.

Repeat this adjustment and try each new position until the most comfortable fit is found. Remember to get out of the chair to make this adjustment and ensure that the backrest supports the lower back and is not placed too low.

Forward/backward position

Adjust the position of the backrest until a comfortable pressure is exerted on the low back area while seated in the usual working posture at the desk. See Figure 2.

The backrest position should not feel as though it pushes you out of the seat or that you have to lean back too far to reach it. There should be a two-finger clearance between the front of the chair and the back of the knee. Trial a number of different positions until the best fit is achieved.

Arm rests

Armrests are usually not recommended unless they are well out of the way of the desk. However, if your chair has arm rests make sure that they do not prevent you from getting as close to the desk as you require or that they impinge on your elbows while you are working. If this is the case, either remove them by unscrewing them or replace them with a smaller option.

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