

## **PGR Tips on making your work environment work for you**

This issue aims to encourage you to think about how you carry out your work, whether you work in a lab, the field, an archive or are based mostly behind your computer. Ergonomics is the science of designing the job, equipment, and workplace to fit the worker. This may not seem the most obvious topic for tips for researchers but ergonomics are relevant to us all. Looking after your posture will help to avoid injuries and benefit your long term health and productivity. Health and safety people in your institution can advise and support you in these matters.

### **Think posture**

Think about your posture. Make sure your chair is adjustable and sit so that your elbows, knees and chin are all at right angles. Health and safety people can advise you.

### **Quiet and light**

Everyone is different, but consider your lighting and the noise levels you work in are working for your own preferences?

### **Repetitive strain injuries**

These are often caused by excessive repetitive movement such as mouse use or, in a lab, by pipetting. What constitutes excessive is going to be different for everyone. Listen to your body's warning signs of any aches and pains and stop when these occur. Using keystrokes and shortcuts will cut down on mouse use. Voice recognition software will cut down on mouse and keyboard use even more if necessary. Consider using any aids for repetitive jobs. Otherwise, make sure you break large jobs into small batches with breaks in between if possible.

### **Beware laptops**

Handy as they are, laptops' small screens and keyboards are not conducive to health. An external mouse and keyboard can help. It is also tempting to use a laptop sitting in an awkward posture, so check yourself.

### **Take a break**

Taking regular breaks will relieve your eyes if you are working on the computer and any muscles that have been in one position for a while. Alternating different tasks will have a similar effect.

### **Heavy Loads**

If you need to handle heavy loads involve the health and safety people in your institution to see how you can be assisted.