

ERGONOMICS

White collar workers can have their own type of injury risk from spending long days sitting at a desk, especially when the chair is not fitted correctly to the person or the desk. Consider that the only furniture someone spends more time in than their office chair is their bed.

Usually, a person's chair is provided by the company and if the company isn't sensitive to ergonomics, that can spell problems. Thankfully, most desk chairs sold in the last five years have some ergonomic consideration in their design. But that still doesn't mean the chair is adjusted to the person or the desk.

"There are guidelines developed by ergonomics experts that can lessen neck strain, back strain and the likelihood that you will develop carpal tunnel wrist problems from long periods at a keyboard," says Dr. Jonathan Burns, a spine specialist at SpineNevada in Reno. "The key to preventing strain is adjusting your chair, because virtually every decent office chair has a height adjustment. So even if the employer invests in an expensive, well-designed ergonomic chair, that doesn't mean it's adjusted for you. A person must raise the chair so the angles are right for their trunk height in relation to their desk."

In a properly adjusted chair, the chair height should be adjusted so the computer monitor is just below eye level. It may be necessary to raise the monitor up 3-6 inches to avoid looking down at a work desk. The computer monitor should be about an arms length away from your eyes. If the screen

is too far away, it can lead to eyestrain and headaches throughout the day. Then adjust the lighting on your computer monitor to help reduce glare and eyestrain.

Your forearms should be parallel to the floor and should not have to reach far to type on the keyboard. Armrests that are too low can cause carpal tunnel syndrome and inflammation in the elbow. Your wrists should be straight when typing or using the mouse.

The lumbar spine (lower back) should be supported by the back of the chair with your feet planted on the floor. The backrest should fit snug and comfortable against your lower back.

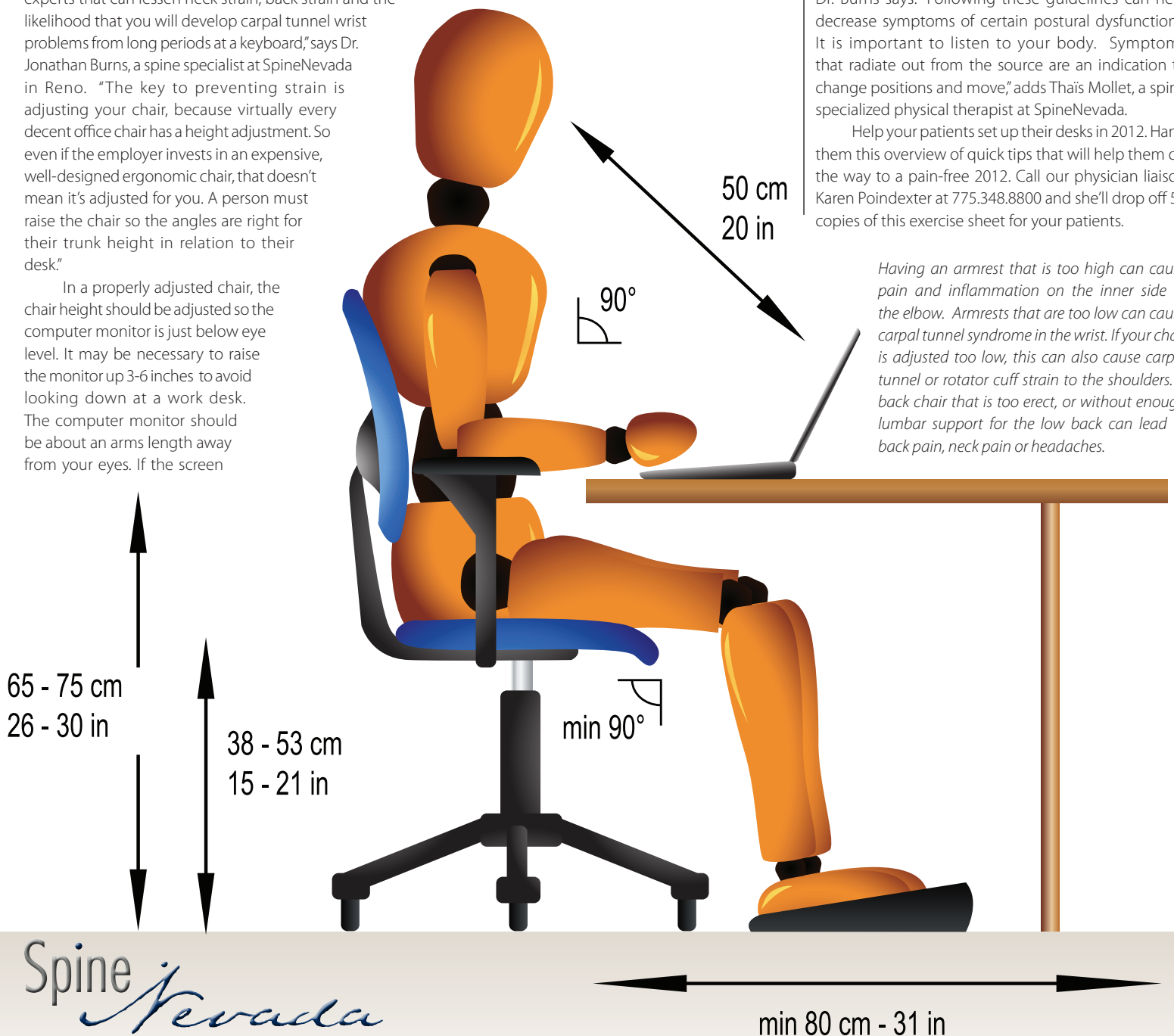
Your thighs should be parallel to the floor and

knees at a 90-degree angle. Some people may find it most comfortable resting their feet on the floor, while others may like a small support to raise their feet. There should be about 3-6 inches of legroom between your lap and desk.

Even with the best chair, though, Dr. Burns recommends movement throughout the day. "Sitting for several hours is a prescription for back pain when you get up," he explains. "The back is not designed to be in a static position for hours. Movement is like WD-40 lubricant for the spine. So every 45 minutes or so, just get up from the desk, stretch a little, or walk to the bathroom... anything so you are moving around a little," Dr. Burns says. "Following these guidelines can help decrease symptoms of certain postural dysfunctions. It is important to listen to your body. Symptoms that radiate out from the source are an indication to change positions and move," adds Thai's Mollet, a spine specialized physical therapist at SpineNevada.

Help your patients set up their desks in 2012. Hand them this overview of quick tips that will help them on the way to a pain-free 2012. Call our physician liaison Karen Poindexter at 775.348.8800 and she'll drop off 50 copies of this exercise sheet for your patients.

Having an armrest that is too high can cause pain and inflammation on the inner side of the elbow. Armrests that are too low can cause carpal tunnel syndrome in the wrist. If your chair is adjusted too low, this can also cause carpal tunnel or rotator cuff strain to the shoulders. A back chair that is too erect, or without enough lumbar support for the low back can lead to back pain, neck pain or headaches.



BODY MECHANICS 2012: How to lift without hurting your back

Have you ever heard of someone straining a thigh muscle while lifting? Probably not. That's because the muscles in the legs are longer, stronger, in better shape and resistant to strain. The muscles and ligaments in the back are shorter, prone to muscle spasm when lifting a heavy object. The most common causes of back strain is from improper body mechanics during lifting, or lifting something that is too heavy. So if an object is too heavy, use a hand truck to lever it up and transport it. Or use a cart or wagon to move it. Always push rather than pull.



MID-THIGH METHOD:

Start with one knee on the ground and arms fully extended. With the power of your arms, lift the object a few inches off the ground and against your thigh. Using the power of your LEGS (not your back), move to a standing position.



SQUAT METHOD:

Position the object between your legs, and keep your arms extended. Keep your back straight as you use the power of your legs (not your arms or back) to lift the object off the ground. As you stand, straighten your back with the object resting on your thighs.

SpineNevada develops this patient education insert as a community service. This insert can be reproduced and distributed to your patients. Contact us at 775.348.8800 and we will send additional copies for your patients. We can also provide 20 copies of our 36-page Home Remedy Book with exercises that relieve symptoms.



Spine Nevada

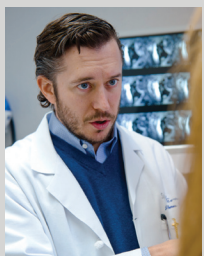
For Referrals & Appointments: **775.348.8800**
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Online spine encyclopedia at SpineNevada.com



James J. Lynch, M.D., FRCSI

Board-certified Neurosurgeon, Fellowship-Trained Spine Surgeon

Dr. James Lynch specializes in complex spine surgery, cervical disorders, degenerative spine, spinal deformities, trauma, tumor infection and minimally invasive spine surgery. Dr. Lynch was the only Nevada spine surgeon selected for the 2011 Becker's Orthopedic & Spine Review's list of "100 of the Best Spine Surgeons and Specialists in America". Dr. Lynch is one of a handful of spine surgeons with three fellowships in the specialty of spine surgery. He completed his residency at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, and went on to complete a spine fellowship at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in Queens Square, London, UK, followed by a spine fellowship at Mayo Clinic and an additional spine fellowship under Volker Sonntag, MD, at the prestigious Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, AZ.



Jonathan D. Burns, M.D.

Board-certified Physical Medicine, Fellowship-Trained Pain Management

Dr. Jonathan Burns completed an interventional Spine and Musculoskeletal Medicine Fellowship at The SMART Clinic in Sandy, Utah. Dr. Burns specializes in the assessment, diagnosis and non-surgical treatment of back and neck pain problems. He is proficient in EMGs and pain-relieving spinal injections. He completed a residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia, where he also served as clinical instructor, elective coordinator and research coordinator. He is a member of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the Physiatric Association of Spine, Sports & Occupational Rehabilitation.

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