

Blame the chair not the person for being a pain in the neck!

Stiff joints and muscles, leg cramping, poor circulation, and overall bodily strain. Do these complaints sound way too familiar? You can resolve most of these with just a little focus on ergonomics—the scientific study of the human body's capabilities and its relationship with the workplace design and physical surrounding.

Ergonomic researchers are concerned with the designs of the office space that is chairs, tables/desks, monitors, etc., to achieve maximum comfort for workers to allow for good health. This includes keeping workers energised and having their spines aligned to avoid office related injuries that strain the body's structure and inflict short or long-term damages.

Dr Mohammad Mohiuddin Araf, Physiatrist and Consultant and Coordinator of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department of Apollo Hospital Dhaka, says as there are two kinds of occupational injuries -- systematic and mechanical, with office injuries falling under the latter category.

"As a specialist, based on my observation, I would have to say that when it comes to office injuries, the probability between the number of male and female patients is roughly the same, since women also work outside the house," he says.

"But there are some specific injuries that have a higher frequency of female patients as opposed to men, especially within the household, from seemingly light tasks that are repetitive and can involve long hours of standing (while cooking), bending over (to pick up children or cleaning). This increases the likelihood of joint pains," he added.

Lateral epicondylitis, better known as Tennis Elbow, is an injury although most commonly seen amongst tennis/badminton athletes due to the repetitive movement of the wrist joint causing pain in the elbow, is also found amongst Bangladeshi

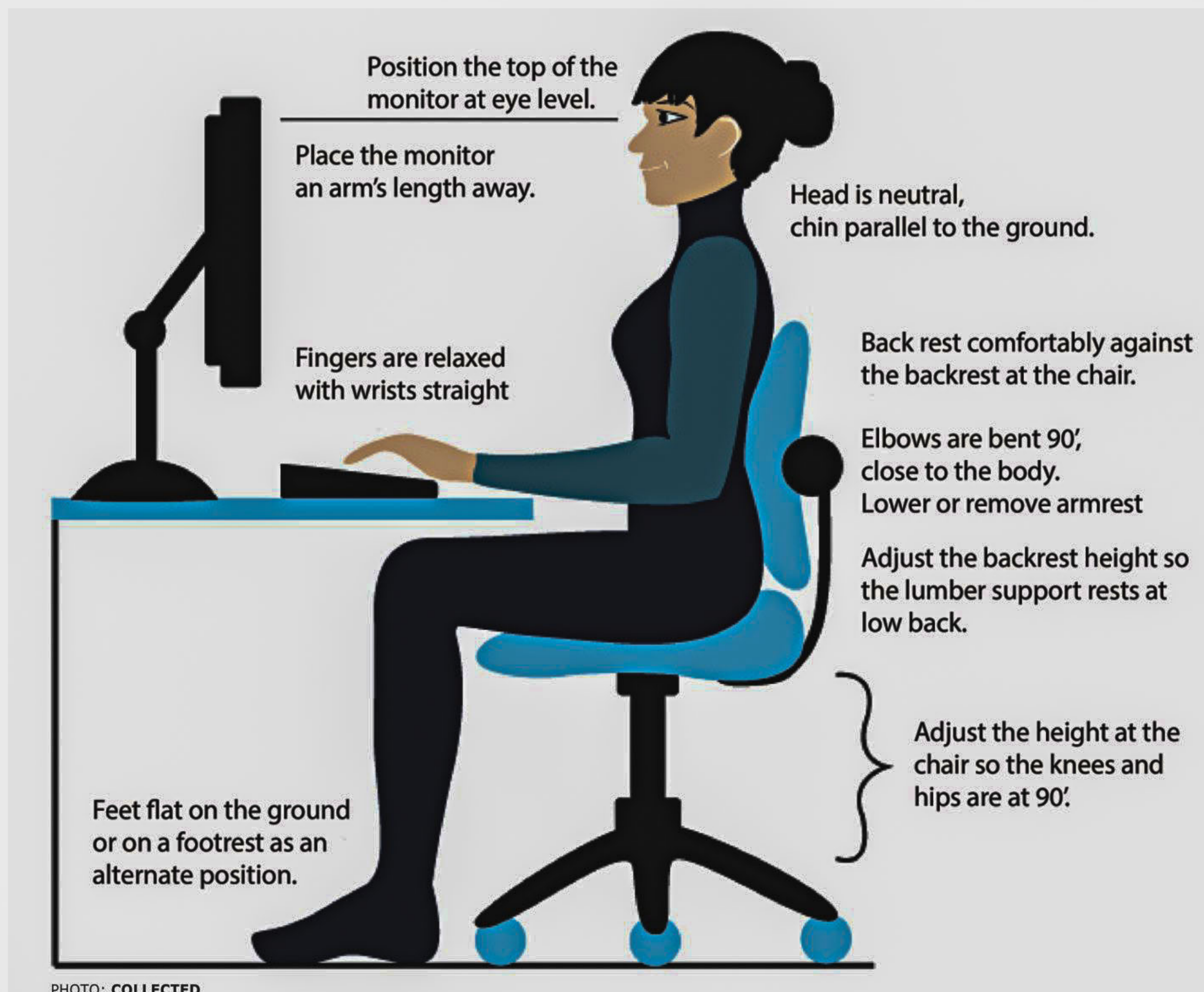


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women due to repetitive motions such as stirring utensils or even wringing washed clothes.

"In combination of working in the office, overall, in some cases it can be suggested that women are more prone to mechanical injuries as a whole than men," he concluded.

The doctor also discussed how mechanical injuries are pain related such as joint, muscle or skin related, and in the case of office injuries, it is the result of sitting for long hours, or working desk jobs also known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), such as those from writing or typing on the keyboard for hours.

The frequency of such cases has

increased in the last five to six years due to awareness and roughly around 25-30 percent of daily patients at Apollo Hospital come in with minor office injuries. When collecting patients' history, they usually mention how their parents had the same complaints as them, suggesting that the condition could possibly be hereditary.

Dr Araf emphasises that that is never the case rather it has to do with leading a sedentary lifestyle and recommends alternating between standing and sitting every half hour.

SOME LONG TERM EFFECTS OF OFFICE INJURIES

Obesity, often a result of sedentary work,

worsens any form of office injury.

Osteoporosis, the medical condition in which there is a reduction in the density and quality of the bone over time, is an earlier and larger risk for women, who often develop the condition after 40, whilst men it begins after 50.

Arthritis is the alteration of bones anywhere in the body, specifically in joints.

Degenerative changes, especially of the mechanical kind, develop with age (changes in the joint) but in recent times, this is no longer the scene due to repetitive wear and tear in joints resulting in early age signs of developing osteoporosis and arthritis.



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