

ISSUE 1 | VOLUME 15  
JANUARY-MARCH 2024

SAFETY & LOSS PREVENTION

# OUTLOOK

## TIME TO GET MOVING

Counteracting the health risks  
associated with sedentary work

**ALSO INSIDE:** The Mediterranean Diet | Protecting Workers from the Cold | DRM's eLearning System







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## A Message from the Editor

Happy 2024!

The start of the new year can be a time of contemplation and self-examination, a chance for a fresh start. 41% of Americans say they set New Year's resolutions for themselves, yet only one in ten is able to keep them. When asked why, some said they struggled to track their progress; others believed that their resolutions were too numerous or too unrealistic, and nearly a quarter of people forgot that they had even made them.

For many of us, our resolutions focus on our health, whether that means exercising more, getting regular checkups, or changing our diet — and the way we think about these goals can make all the difference. Success or failure might have less to do with good intentions and more to do with the type of resolutions we make — that is, the way we frame them in our mind. Research suggests those who make approach-oriented goals (being motivated by a positive outcome) seem to be more successful than those whose goals are focused more on avoidance (eliminating a negative outcome).

Here in the Division of Risk Management, we hope you will resolve to stay safe and healthy throughout the new year.

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# STAGNATION

## ~~SITTING~~ IS THE “NEW SMOKING”

In recent years, medical experts have expressed concern about our increasingly sedentary lifestyle, particularly for those of us who work in jobs that keep us tied to our desks. Some have gone so far as to suggest sitting might be as dangerous to our health, if not more, than smoking.

Though it may be a bit of a stretch to compare the two (they are distinct behaviors with different levels of associated risk), the health risks of too much sitting should not be discounted. Research has found an association between high volumes of sitting (e.g., 8+ hours/day) and adverse health outcomes — greater instances of metabolic syndrome (a cluster of conditions such as high blood pressure, increased blood sugar, and high cholesterol), a 10-20% higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer, and almost double the risk of type 2 diabetes — deeply concerning, considering the majority of American adults spend around 8 hours a day sitting.

One might assume the solution is simple — just stand up. Standing desks have taken off during the past decade as a way to avoid prolonged sitting. But what if sitting itself isn't the problem? Prolonged standing carries its own set of hazards: it increases pressure on the cartilage in the knees, hips, and balls of the feet, which can cause inflammation and stiffness; it requires 20% more energy than sitting, and while it burns more calories, it also places a greater strain on the circulatory system, which can lead to leg swelling, varicose veins, and even a serious condition known as chronic venous insufficiency, or CVI (often referred to as phlebitis).

Not only that, standing doesn't prevent or even reduce most of the health issues associated with prolonged sitting. That's because **the converse of sitting is not standing, but moving**. Sitting and standing are both stagnant activities that decrease flexibility, blood flow, and absorption of nutrients needed for the brain and muscles to work properly. “Think about a fresh flowing stream versus water that sits,” suggests Greg Wells, assistant professor at the University of Toronto. “Sitting water becomes stagnant with low oxygen, and viruses and bacteria grow in it. There's a similar effect inside the human body.”

According to the American Heart Association, sedentary jobs have increased

### HEALTH ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH STAGNATION

#### PROLONGED SITTING

- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Hip and back issues
- Osteoporosis
- Blood clots in the legs

#### PROLONGED STANDING

- Sore feet
- Varicose veins
- Muscular fatigue
- Low back pain
- Arthritis
- Edema in legs and feet
- Painful joints in knees and hips
- Neck and shoulder stiffness
- Chronic venous insufficiency (CVI, aka phlebitis)

83% since 1950, and those who sit longer at work are not inclined to make up for it by exercising more in their off hours, but are actually more likely to sit longer outside of work as well. It may seem counterintuitive, but keeping your body active throughout the workday actually increases the likelihood that you'll be more active outside of work as well.

What most experts currently recommend for long hours of sedentary work is to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day. This can be achieved either with or without a standing desk — taking breaks from traditional desk work to get up, stretch, and walk around throughout the day can help. Advice on how often and how long to stand varies, but most recommend changing from a seated position at least once an hour.

The most important thing is to make it a habit to change between static and dynamic activity. Studies have indicated that most people will revert to their old ways of sitting for too long after an initial trial period. Setting alarms or other types of reminders can help us to remember to move until a new habit is established (and going forward).

# WAYS TO GET ACTIVE THROUGHOUT THE WORKDAY

- **Stand up.** Take a break from sitting in your chair, either by using a standing desk part of the day or by just getting up and stretching your legs at least once every hour.
- **Take the stairs.** Stair climbing is a free, low-impact aerobic exercise that works all the major muscle groups in the legs.
- **Drink lots of water.** All those trips to the water cooler (and the restroom!) add up.
- **Alternate sitting and standing tasks.** Integrate jobs that can be done standing (e.g. copying, sorting mail, etc.) into your work routine to break up long periods of sitting.
- **Find excuses to walk.** Park at the far end of the parking lot. Do laps around the building while talking on the phone. Use shared office equipment such as printers and copiers to increase the need for employees to get up and walk around.
- **Set a timer to remember to take breaks.** Use a phone or a smartwatch to alert you when it's time to get up and move around.
- **Make it a game.** Implementing challenges with rewards to be earned can incentivize participation and make it more fun. Group activities help employees keep each other on task to achieve goals for their teammates.



**Need a brainstorming session  
with your colleagues?  
Walk and talk!**

## **Walking meetings:**

Relieve  
stress

Provide a  
change of  
pace and  
scenery

Stimulate  
creativity &  
improve  
collaboration

Allow indoor  
workers an  
opportunity  
to get some  
fresh air

Increase  
efficiency  
(making  
meetings  
shorter!)



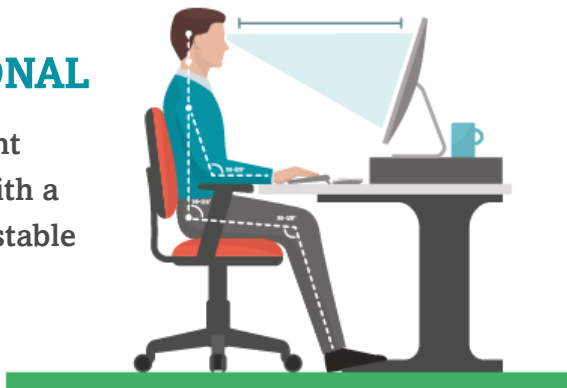
# HOW ERGONOMICALLY CORRECT IS YOUR WORKSTATION?

Creating a workspace that's functional and properly fitted to the individual can not only help to prevent musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) but can also reduce muscle fatigue and increase productivity.

## OFFICE WORKSTATION TYPES

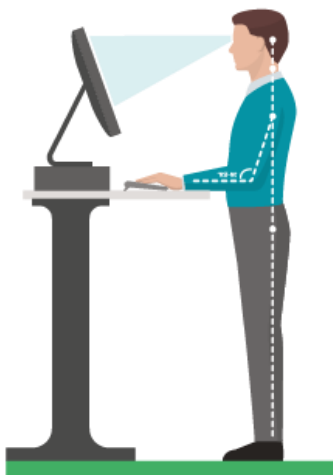
### TRADITIONAL

Standard height seated desk with a standard adjustable chair



### STANDING

Fixed-height desk adjusted and set to fit the user; may include a stool for long periods of use



### SIT-TO-STAND

Desk can be adjusted to work in a sitting or standing position; includes motorized and hand-crank types

## CHAIR

- ☐ It should have adjustable height in order to fit the chair to the desk and position the user's knees at or below hip level.
- ☐ It should have a five-point base for more stability and to prevent tilting.
- ☐ The backrest should provide adequate support and have adjustable lumbar support to help prevent low back pain by putting your spine in the most comfortable position.
- ☐ The seat pan should be the proper width and depth to fit the user comfortably. Adjustable armrests and seat depth (allowing movement of the seat pan forward or backward) can make the chair fit users of different proportions.
- ☐ The seat cushion should have a rounded front to keep from putting pressure on the back of the knees, and the padding should provide adequate support and comfort.
- ☐ An adjustable tilt feature can help assure the user's knees and hips are at a 90 degree angle.
- ☐ The user's feet should rest flat on the floor; a footrest can help to keep feet from dangling.
- ☐ Armrests should be padded to comfortably support the user's elbows and should not interfere with normal movements (rolling, swiveling, etc.).

## DESK

- ☐ The desktop should have adequate space to perform tasks without twisting, bending, or reaching.
- ☐ The space under the desk should allow the chair to swivel without obstruction.

## KEYBOARD / MOUSE

- Keyboard and mouse placement is critical to preventing pain in the wrists, elbows, upper arms, and neck. The user should be able to keep elbows close to the body without having to extend the upper arms.
- Laptops do not allow for proper body placement, so an external keyboard and mouse is in order.
- Arms and wrists must be supported in a way that allows periodic rests while using the keyboard and/or mouse — this is to prevent shoulder drooping, which can cause pain and injury. Any surface where arms and wrists rest upon should be free of any hard or sharp edges.
- Keyboard and mouse position should be angled to allow a neutral wrist posture — hands should be in a straight line with forearms (not bent up, down, or sideways). If the keyboard does not allow for angle adjustments, an angled keyboard stand must be used.

## MONITOR

- The monitor should be placed away from windows and task lights to avoid glare, both in front of and behind the screen. Keep windows to the side of the screen if possible; otherwise positioning the window behind you is better than facing the window.
- The user should be able to look at the screen without twisting the head or neck. The top line of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level.
- The monitor should be positioned at about an arm's length away from the user; the screen should be clear and easy to read without leaning forward or backward.
- **Dual monitors:** If used equally throughout the day, they should be placed directly in front of the user and angled 10-30 degrees in a “V” shape. If one is used as a primary monitor more than 70% of the day, position that monitor directly in front of the user.

## TELEPHONE

- The phone should be placed within easy reach on the non-dominant side of the user's body.
- A headset should be provided for those who use a phone frequently to avoid bending the neck and to allow hands to be free to perform other tasks, like typing or writing.

## DOCUMENTS

- A vertical document holder should be provided for tasks such as data entry, etc.; it should be placed at about the same height and distance as the monitor screen.

# ADJUSTABLE WORKSTATIONS

## WHO NEEDS ONE?

Anyone who spends prolonged periods of time sitting in a chair to perform their work (typically at a computer) can benefit from an adjustable desk, especially those for whom stepping away from their workstations is not feasible. An adjustable workstation can allow employees such as receptionists, IT support staff, and anyone doing highly focused or specialized work that would be adversely affected by interruptions (scientists, writers, computer programmers, etc.) to continue working while also changing from a seated posture.

People with medical conditions that may be exacerbated by standing (e.g., edema, vertigo, etc.) should consult a doctor before switching to a standing desk.

Remember that a standing desk does not eliminate the need for comfortable seating, an ergonomic computer setup, taking breaks to prevent eye strain, and switching from a static position to a dynamic one (e.g. stretching, walking around, etc. vs. just standing up).

Musculoskeletal injuries can still occur if standing desks are used improperly.



## LIMITATIONS & HAZARDS

All adjustable desks have weight capacity limits that should not be exceeded; storage of materials on adjustable desk platforms should be kept to a minimum for safety.

Employees of non-typical height may find it difficult to place the keyboard or monitor in a proper ergonomic position on an adjustable desk.

Look for all-in-one adjustable desks (where the movable platform is part of the desk itself) or a sit-on-top unit that can be securely attached to an existing surface. If the unit does not have the option of attaching to the desk, it should be returned to seat height when not in use.

Raising and lowering the platform creates a pinch point hazard, where objects or body parts can become trapped underneath or in the mechanism itself. When choosing a powered desk, consider the use of anti-collision detection technology — sensors can detect an obstruction and stop a moving desktop before it gets crushed. This is especially useful on desks with multiple tiers, where the monitor on the top tier could be hit by the lower tier when it is raised. Anti-collision sensors can come built into a powered desk or added as a separate plug-in unit.

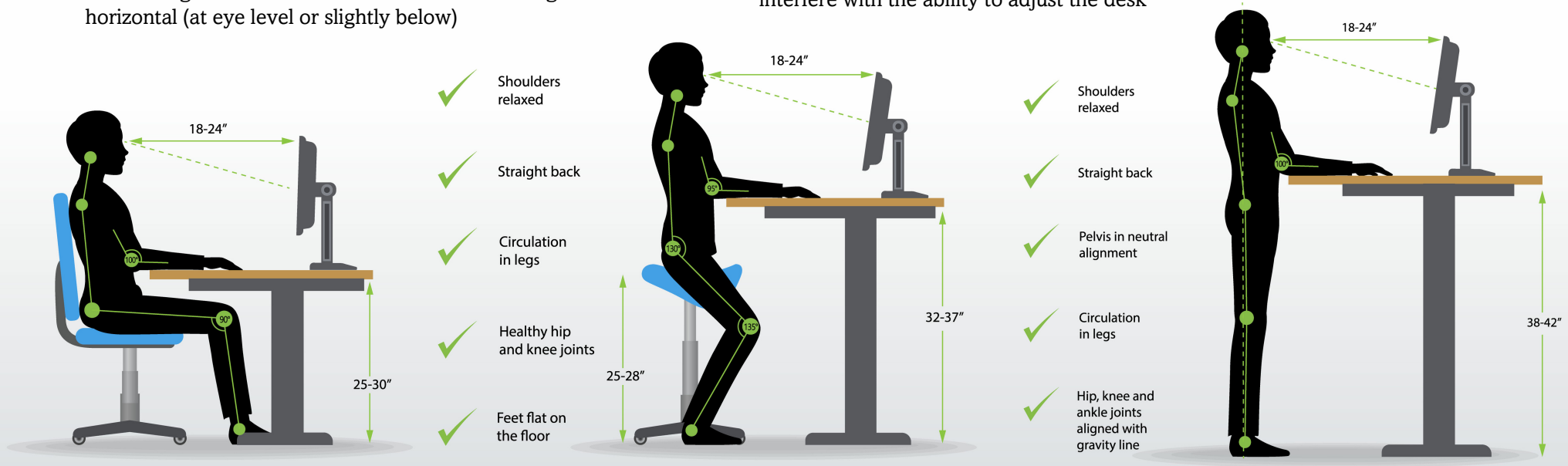
## PROPER WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS

Whether sitting or standing, the most important thing is to maintain as neutral a body position as possible.

- Hands, wrists, and forearms are straight and roughly parallel to the floor
- Head is level, forward-facing, and balanced, in line with the torso
- Spine is upright; upper torso is straight
- Shoulders are relaxed; upper arms hang normally at the sides of the body
- Elbows are close to the body and bent at about 90 degrees
- Monitor sight line is between horizontal and 30 degrees below horizontal (at eye level or slightly below)

### Specific to standing desks:

- Platform height should be at elbow position when standing (arms are in the same position as when sitting)
- Keyboard, mouse, and monitors are aligned as they would be when sitting
- Wear supportive footwear and use an anti-fatigue mat
- Use a footrest to help shift your weight as needed
- Make sure cables, electrical access, storage of materials, and general layout do not interfere with the ability to adjust the desk



# Protect against the cold: Tips for employers and workers

November 28, 2021



A thorough workplace safety and health plan should include steps to protect workers from cold-related hazards. This is particularly important for workers in the services, transportation, construction and agriculture industries.

“Exposure to cold can be an uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situation,” says NIOSH, which offers recommendations for both employers and workers.

## Employers should:

- Train supervisors and workers to prevent, recognize and treat cold-related illnesses and injuries. This training should be presented in a language all workers understand.
- Reduce the amount of time workers spend in a cold environment. Rotate workers in and out on long, demanding jobs.
- Provide access to warm areas, and encourage workers to take breaks in those areas. Also, set up a place for workers to change out of wet clothes.
- Initiate a buddy system for workers to help monitor them in cold conditions.
- Keep a first aid kit stocked, and make sure to include a medical and environmental thermometer as well as chemical heat packs.
- Provide appropriate cold-weather gear such as hats, gloves and boots for work in cold environments. Don't forget wind-protective clothing based on air velocities.
- Give prompt medical attention to workers who show signs of cold-related illness or injury.

## Workers can help by:

- Taking regular breaks to warm up.
- Monitoring your physical condition and that of co-workers.
- Staying hydrated.
- Snacking on high-carbohydrate foods.
- Avoiding touching cold metal or wet surfaces with bare skin.



# Keep indoor workers safe from cold temperatures, too

November 22, 2022

When it comes to protecting your employees from the cold, don't forget about your indoor workers.

“Workers – both indoors and outdoors – in services, transportation, agriculture, construction and other industries may be exposed to environmental cold stress that can lead to thermal discomfort, and in some cases even severe injuries, illnesses or death,” NIOSH warns. “For indoor workers, work in cold, damp conditions can be uncomfortable and may lead to declining work performance (i.e., a decline in cognitive function and dexterity), or result in cold-related illness or injury. Cold-related conditions can also worsen musculoskeletal injuries and vascular disorders.”

NIOSH has these tips to help:

- Install equipment in the workplace to help reduce drafts and condensation.
- Provide warm water or dry air heaters outside cold rooms for workers to warm their hands during breaks.
- Perform preventive maintenance on a regular schedule and make repairs if heating systems aren't working properly.
- Rotate employees to different tasks after every break.
- Minimize work requiring manual dexterity in cold rooms.
- Provide glove alternatives for workers inside cold rooms (e.g., glove liners or fingerless gloves to wear under plastic gloves).





# The Mediterranean Diet

What it is, how to follow it, and why more and more doctors are recommending it to their patients

## A Focus on Real Food

**The Mediterranean diet is a pattern of eating based around ingredients traditionally eaten by people living along the banks of the Mediterranean Sea, focusing on whole, minimally-processed foods that are high in nutrients, lean protein, and antioxidants.**

## Evidence of Health Benefits

**Nutrition experts have been researching its effects for decades, and a recent review of more than 50 scientific studies found strong evidence that a Mediterranean-style diet delivers impressive health benefits like no other.**

### WEIGHT MAINTENANCE

A 2013 study published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* asked healthy women aged 18-44 to follow the Mediterranean diet and found that those who most closely adhered to the diet had a lower body mass than those who adhered the least.

### CARDIOVASCULAR

Participants in a 2013 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* saw their risk of heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular diseases drop by 30 percent.

### BRAIN HEALTH

Multiple studies found the Mediterranean style of eating to be associated with less cognitive decline, reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease, better memory, and increased executive function — one 2015 study published by the American Academy of Neurology likened it to reducing the brain's age by five years.

## Not Your Mother's Diet Plan

**Many find it easier to follow than traditional diets that focus on restricting calories, carbs, or fats because it requires very little measuring or counting, if any, and it can be done by simply making small changes to your diet at your own pace. Eating the Mediterranean way means slowing down, paying attention to flavors, and savoring each bite.**

### MORE PLANTS, LESS MEAT

Non-starchy vegetables and fruits should make up at least half of your meals. Get your protein from poultry, fish, and beans. Limit red meat, pork, and processed meats.

### WHOLE GRAINS

Switch out processed grains like white rice and flour for whole grains such as brown rice, oats, wheat, barley, quinoa, and dried corn (as cornmeal or popcorn).

### FATS & DAIRY

Avocados, nuts, and seeds are nutritious fat options. Substitute highly saturated fats such as butter and vegetable oil with extra virgin olive oil for cooking and in recipes. Enjoy cultured cheeses like parmesan and feta, as well as Greek yogurt.

### SPICE IT UP

Garlic, onions, herbs, and spices provide antioxidants along with added flavor (which can reduce the need for extra salt).

# Wondering where to start?

Here's a sample menu based on the principles of a Mediterranean-style diet:

**BREAKFAST** 1 cup Greek yogurt with 3/4 cup fresh fruit & 1/4 cup walnuts  
One slice whole wheat toast with 1/4 cup mashed avocado or 2 tsp natural nut butter  
Coffee or tea

**LUNCH** 1 cup lentil or minestrone soup  
1 whole wheat pita with 2 Tbsp hummus  
1/2 cup chopped tomatoes & 1/2 cup chopped cucumber with 2 Tbsp olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and basil  
Water with a squeeze of lemon, lime, or orange  
One apple, peach, or orange

**DINNER** 3-4 oz broiled fish brushed with olive oil and seasoned with lemon and dill  
1 cup cooked brown rice  
1 cup steamed carrots  
1-2 cups baby spinach and arugula salad with 2 Tbsp olive oil vinaigrette dressing  
Decaf green tea or 5 oz red wine (ask your doctor)

**SNACKS** 1 oz lowfat mozzarella cheese  
15 grapes  
1 oz dark chocolate

**NUTRITION INFORMATION** 2200 calories | 38% fats (8% saturated, 11% polyunsaturated, 19% monounsaturated | 43g fiber

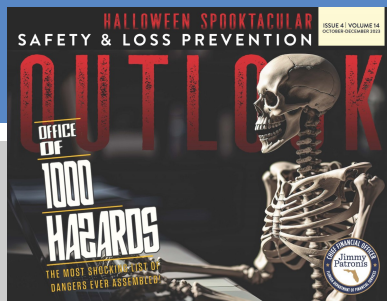
For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Nutrition and Food Services webpage at: <https://www.nutrition.va.gov/>





Miss a  
previous issue?  
Browse the

# OUTLOOK Online Library



## E-Learning

from the  
DIVISION OF RISK MANAGEMENT

The safety training required per section 284.50, F.S. for all newly-appointed safety and alternate safety coordinators, previously available solely in webinar format, is now being provided through online training modules available at your convenience.

**PEOPLE  
FIRST**



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  - Submit your information
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**For the complete  
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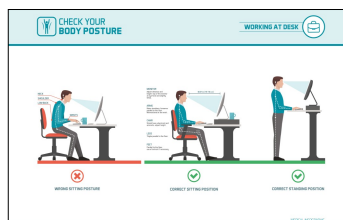


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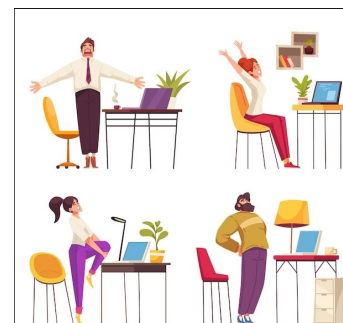


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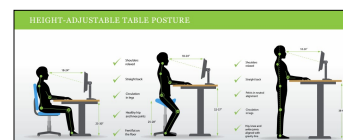


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