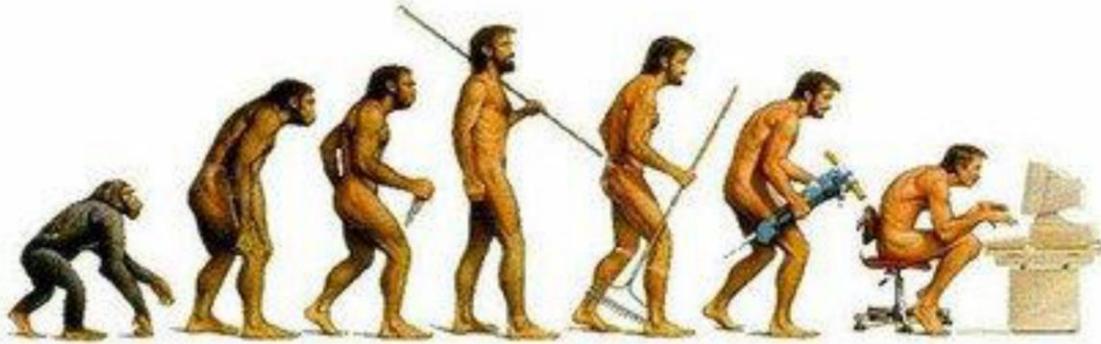


HEADSETS : NOT NEGOTIABLE



THE HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY BENEFITS OF USING HEADSETS AT WORK

In today's modern world, it has become increasingly rare to find any office space without a desk workstation including a computer and telephone at the minimum. Our use of computers and telephones continues to increase with the advances in computer technology, software and hardware. Not surprisingly so has the number of subsequent problems people experience with performance, comfort and health, (Shikdar A. & Al-Kindi M., 2007), that comes from remaining in a static position for the long periods of time spent at a desk. Work-related musculoskeletal injuries / disorders now represent a larger percentage of morbidity and absenteeism in the workplace, (Punnett, L., Cherniack, M., Henning, R., Morse, T., & Faghri, P, 2009), than ever before with more people developing back, neck, shoulder, arm and hand and wrist pain. Along with increased absenteeism, staff performance and productivity is also significantly decreased, leading to decreased company innovation and profit. As you may imagine, this can have a detrimental impact not just on the individual but also on the organization and society in a ruthless business world where competition is high and we are having to work harder to meet deadlines.

Globally, companies are beginning to incorporate the science of ergonomics into their office designs to prevent work-related disorders as well as correct the already present negative effects of incorrect workstation set up (Dul, J. & Ceylan, C. 2010). Ergonomics is "the science and technology of fitting the activities and environment to the abilities, dimensions and needs of people to improve performance while enhancing comfort and health and safety" (Shikdar A. & Al-Kindi M., 2007). With correct ergonomic set-up including taking into consideration the overall office environment, desk type and height, chair type and adjustability, physical computer and computer accessory layout, telephone set up, and education provision, staff have been found to experience decreased pain symptoms and days absent with increased productivity and creativity (Chandra, A., Chandna, P., Deswal, S., & Kumar, R., 2009).

With our growing use of technology, we're also seeing the use of multiple pieces of technology simultaneously. Increasingly, individuals are required to use a keyboard while on the telephone and this, coupled with prolonged telephone use frequently leads to a deviation in natural body posture causing discomfort in the head, neck and back (Chandra, A., Chandna, P., Deswal, S., & Kumar, R, 2009). Many health care professionals now recommend the use of headsets while at work if a person's role involves using a telephone and correct headset set-up, use and education has been shown to lead to increased productivity at work because it frees is both hands to allow for use of a keyboard handling documents and making notes, enables the microphone to stay in the same position as you move your head and speak, so your voice stays consistent, filters out up to 75% of background sounds when using noise cancelling headsets so that your callers hear only you, even in noisy environments, and allows an individual to maintain a correct, neutral and upright posture while working to decrease musculoskeletal discomfort and consequently, absenteeism from work due to pain and injury.

Conclusively, research has shown that making even small changes such as introducing a headset to the work environment, can lead to positive improvements for both an individual as well as a workplace as whole.

COMPILED BY: Christie Baird BSc (OT) Hons



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