



Top 10 Ways to Monitor Kids' Computer Health

1. **Keep feet on the ground.** Make sure that the child's feet are touching the ground or a stool when seated. Knees should be at a 90-degree angle. This distributes weight better and takes pressure off the upper body. Consider investing in a height-adjustable chair.
2. **Sit up straight.** Make sure that the child sits tall with weight on the buttocks and feet. The pelvis should be straight up and down.
3. **Eyes level with screen.** A good rule of thumb is to make sure the top of the child's head is level with the top of the screen. A monitor that is too low or too high could lead to neck strain.
4. **Forearms parallel.** Make sure that forearms are parallel to the floor and the elbows are at a 90-degree angle.
5. **Shoulder blades settled.** Shoulder blades should be settled on the back of the ribs, not in an arched or hunched position.
6. **Correct mouse.** For smaller children, consider investing in a kid-sized mouse. Children using an adult-sized mouse are at greater risk for fatigue and discomfort in the wrist and forearm. The larger mouse forces the hand into an awkward position and the muscles become over-stretched and fatigued.
7. **Rest the eyes.** Children should look away from the computer occasionally and focus on distant objects. Staring uninterrupted at a computer screen for long periods of time can cause eye-strain and headaches.
8. **Take a break.** Encourage a mandatory break from the computer *at least every 20 minutes*.
9. **Stretch and move.** Get up and stretch periodically. Do stretches such as head turns, shoulder rolls and marching in place.
10. **Watch for problems.** Look for warning signs such as headaches, muscle fatigue, muscle pain or cramping and intervene *early*. Post these rules near the computer and make them part of a daily, healthy routine!

These tips are not intended as a substitute for professional health care.



Ergonomics for Kids Talking Points

- Children are experiencing problems that used to be found in adults, such as carpal tunnel syndrome (pressure and swelling of the median nerve inside the narrow tunnel in the wrist), tendinitis (an inflammation of the tendons which may occur after repetitive motion or awkward postures), and tension headaches.
- Kids are making some common ergonomic mistakes:
 - Sitting too long at a computer without moving around or changing position, which can result in repetitive motion disorders and muscle strain.
 - Not sitting up straight.
 - Not keeping eyes level with screen.
 - Not keeping elbows and knees at right angles.
 - Not using the correct-size mouse.
- Physical therapists recommend that children do the following:
 - Keep feet flat on the floor or on a stool/footrest.
 - Sit up straight.
 - Keep eyes level with the screen.
 - Take breaks at least every 20 minutes to avoid muscle fatigue.
- For younger children who may be sitting at adult-size computer workstations, physical therapists suggest:
 - Using a stool or other object to keep the child's feet supported.
 - Using a wrist rest for correct positioning and reducing fatigue.
 - Using glare screens to reduce reflections.
- A physical therapist can assess a person's potential risk for conditions such as tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome and develop an intervention program that includes stretching, exercise, and adjustments to the work environment. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, or muscle pain, consult a physical therapist.