



Break Times

It is your responsibility to remain healthy and productive at work. Making the most of frequent breaks is the key to both. Many people don't take advantage of these breaks, thinking that they may appear self-indulgent or a poor use of time, when in fact the opposite is true! Take time for yourself!

Looking at a computer screen or equipment requiring rigorous focus (e.g.: microscope) for long periods causes some changes in how the eyes work, causes you to blink less often, and exposes more of the eye surface to the air. Every so often you should briefly look away from the screen to a more distant scene. A good example is: **every 7 minutes, look at something 7 feet away for 7 seconds**. This lets the muscles inside the eye relax. Also, blink your eyes rapidly for a few seconds. This refreshes the tear layer on, and clears dust from, the eye surface. If you wear contact lenses, this may be more important for you!

Most tactile work is done in bursts rather than continuously. Between these bursts of activity you should rest your hands in a relaxed, neutral posture. During a micro-break (less than 2 minutes) you can stretch, stand up, move around, close your eyes and relax, or do a different work task (e.g.: make a phone call). A micro-break isn't necessarily a break from work, but it's a break from the use of a particular set of muscles that have been doing most of the work (e.g.: the finger flexors if you do a lot of typing).

Every 2 hours you should take a 15-20 minute rest break. During this break stand up, move around and go do something else (e.g.: go get a drink or snack). When you can, leave your area completely and get some fresh air. These breaks allow you to rest frequently-used muscles and exercise those that have not had the chance. Getting up and out during these break times will increase your energy throughout the day.

There are many stretching and gentle exercises that you can do at work to help relieve muscle fatigue. These are not designed to stress muscles, rather you want to go through range of motion. You should do these every 1-2 hours, depending on what kind of work you do. Suggestions are offered by Environmental Health and Radiation Safety at 503 494-7795.

