

How should you sit to prevent injuries when using the computer?

In a school, there is always furniture that fits young children. That's not always the case at home. Even with furniture that fits, it's often tough to get youngsters to sit properly through the whole class!

Family computers are often set up to promote 'at-risk' computer usage behaviors. We share them, so we don't always have a chair that adjusts for every family member. We may not have an adjustable tray for the keyboard and mouse—something that would allow each person in the family to work in a more neutral posture that promotes less stress and reduces the long-term chance of injury. When all family members are about the same height, it's easier to make this work.

But how do we create a healthy ergonomic computer environment for our young children? Most of us haven't room to add a child's table and chair, and a computer just for the children isn't necessarily a good idea, so we need to find a way to make sharing work without starting them down the road to injuries. Here are some ideas that might work for you, since it's not practical to consider moving the whole machine to a lower table and chair each time a child wishes to use it:

- Can the table or chair be adjusted for people of different heights?
- Can you add an adjustable tray for the keyboard and mouse? This would allow each family member to position the keyboard and mouse so that they can keep their hands, wrists, and forearms straight and level with the floor—a neutral posture that reduces the risk of carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Make sure you have a crate or box or footstool so that the child can sit properly, with feet supported. This will align the thigh so that it's parallel with the floor. Shorter adults may need a footrest as well.
- Do you have an old booster seat? It might allow the child to sit in a more neutral posture while using the grown-up chair, but you'll have to try it out to be sure.
- If the chair is a good size for adults, but on the big side for children, use a back support of some kind, even a pillow, to promote proper seating posture in the chair.
- If you have a monitor whose height can be adjusted, teach your child how to gently lower it so that he or she can sit with head straight and view the monitor properly.
- Make sure that your work area allows people to reach things without stretching too far—that also adds stress.



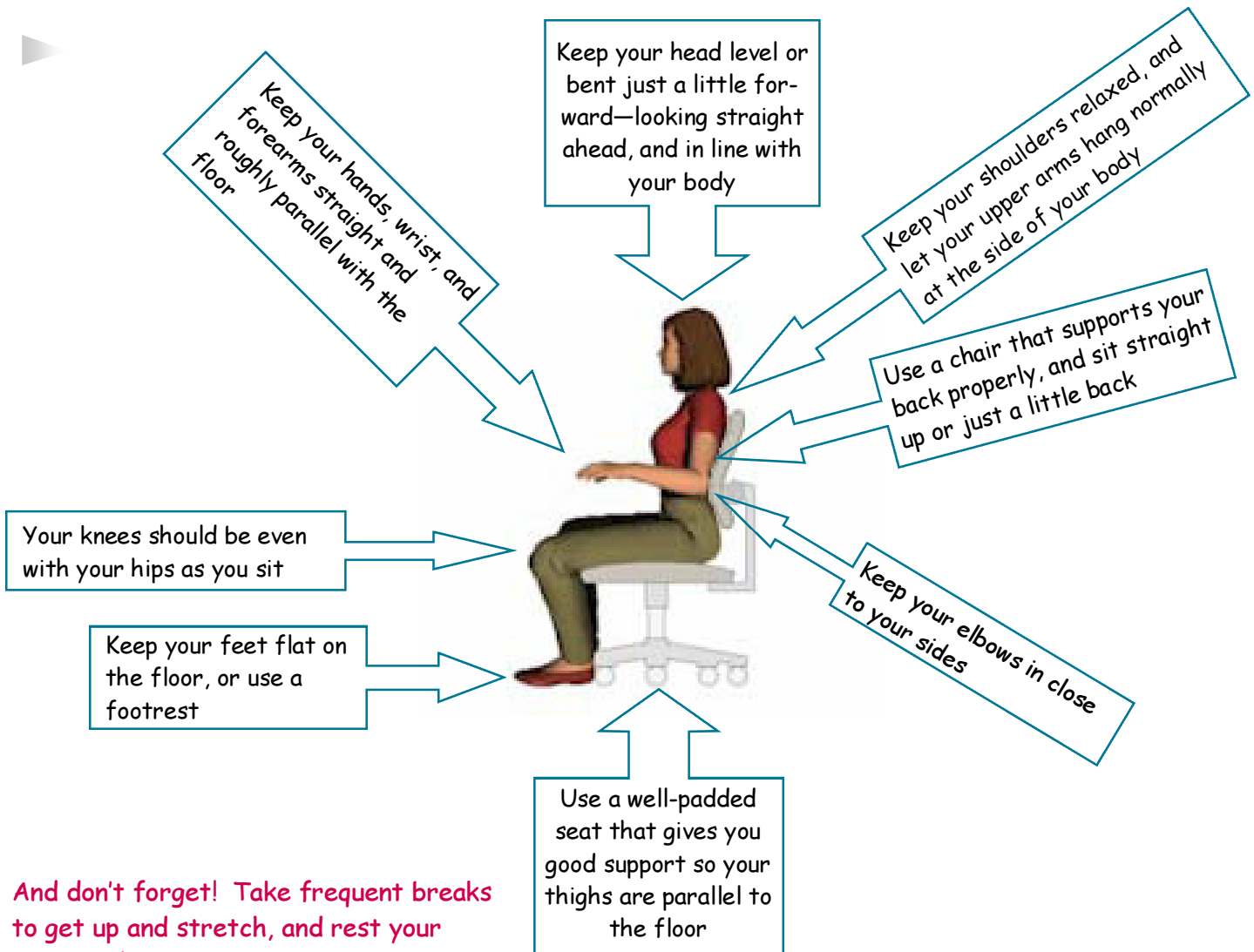
 **CompuChild**
Kids Computer Classes

97 3rd St #1
Newport, RI 02840
401.841.5268 (phone and fax)
www.compuchild-ri.com
rgardner@compuchild.com

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And don't forget! Take frequent breaks to get up and stretch, and rest your eyes, too!

For more information visit these websites:

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/positions.html>

http://www.ergonomics.com.au/pages/400_useful_info/420_how_to_sit.htm

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