

Health & Safety Tip #33

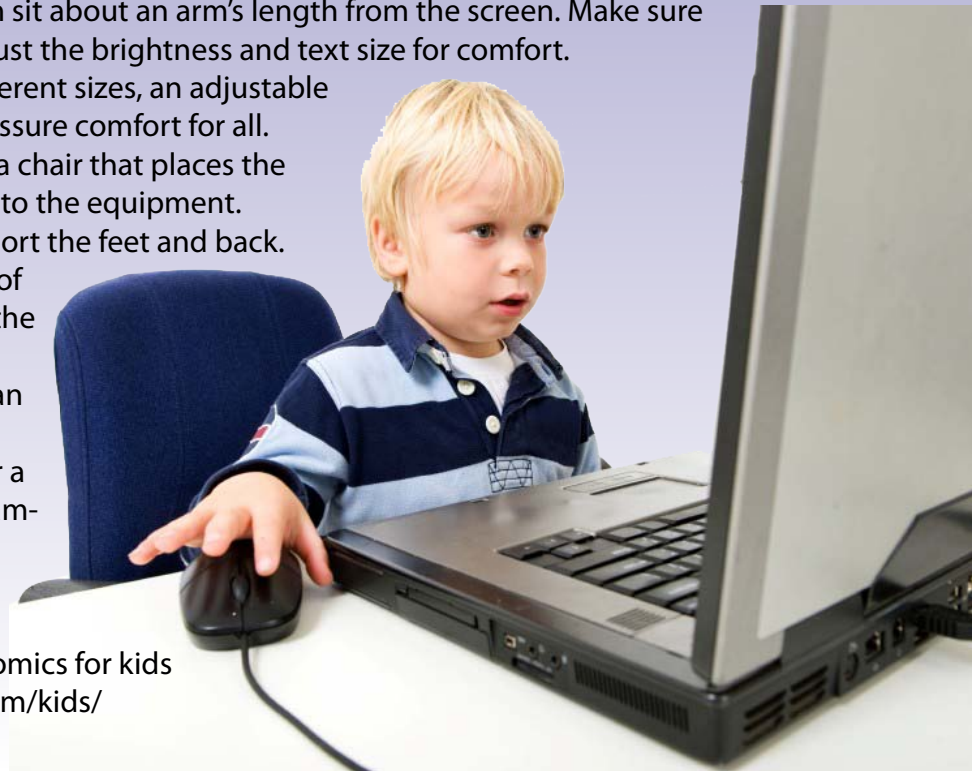
Computer Ergonomics For Kids

As kids get into the homework routine, they will likely be spending more time in front of the computer. But how does your home workstation measure up when it comes to your child? VIHA wants to remind parents to ensure that basic ergonomic principles are being applied when it comes to kids' screen time.

"Some kids are spending hours at a time surfing the net or playing computer games, often craning their necks to see monitors that are perched too high, or bending their elbows and wrists at awkward angles to reach the keyboard," says VIHA School Occupational Therapist Adelle Rama. "We need to start applying the basics of ergonomics to children."

Here are some tips on proper placement of equipment and furniture, which will promote good posture and proper hand position:

- ~ The keyboard and mouse should be directly under the fingers when elbows are bent to about 90 degrees with upper arms relaxed. Make sure the child's wrists stay straight when keying or mousing, and do not bend up, down or to the side. The mouse should be right next to the keyboard so it's easy to reach. For small hands, invest in a kid-sized mouse and keyboard.
- ~ Children shouldn't need to bend their neck back to look at the screen. Align the top of the monitor screen with the child's forehead so it is below eye level, directly in front, not off to the side. To minimize strain on the eyes make sure children sit about an arm's length from the screen. Make sure the screen is free from glare, and adjust the brightness and text size for comfort.
- ~ If the workstation serves users of different sizes, an adjustable keyboard tray and pneumatic chair assure comfort for all.
- ~ If furniture is not adjustable, choose a chair that places the child at the proper height in relation to the equipment.
- ~ Provide a footrest and pillow to support the feet and back.
- ~ Active breaks and frequent changes of position increase circulation and let the eyes relax. Parents should make sure that children who spend more than an hour at the computer get up at least every half-hour and move around for a moment. Arrange for regular eye examinations, and encourage recreational exercise.



Further information about computer ergonomics for kids can be found at: www.healthycomputing.com/kids/