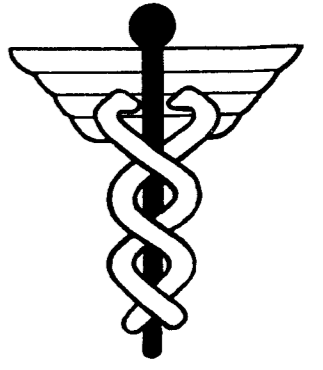


# Healthy Living



in college and for life

•April 2001•

## Stay safe while clicking the keyboard

by Ryan Anthony  
staff writer

Only one week of classes remains in the semester. This means either A: you blow off whatever classes you have left every day so you can bask in the sun and anticipate the quickly approaching summer, or B: you barely have time to read this newspaper because your butt is glued to your chair as you sit and type paper after paper, wondering how your professors could possibly have managed to squeeze three extra assignments into the last week of the syllabus.

If you are like most students, choice B is correct. Shouldn't professors know by now that all these extra assignments cut into the quality of work? Regardless, if you selected B, chances are you will find yourself sitting in front of the computer for the next two weeks until you are done with finals and ready to go home. As long as the next couple weeks will leave you in a miserable situation, you might as well make yourself as comfortable as possible.

Simply adjusting your position at your computer can get you through those long hours staring at the screen. Here are some hints to help you end your semester on a high note.

The layout of your desk plays a big role in your comfort as you sit at your computer. An improperly placed keyboard or monitor could be the reason behind your sore wrists and stiff neck. When you set up your room at the beginning of the year, you probably did not give much thought to the arrangement that would be most comfortable;

your goal was to squeeze as much stuff into your dorm room as you possibly could. A whole branch of science calls for you to rethink your desk arrangements.

Ergonomics is the science of work. It examines how you can most comfortably get work done in an efficient manner. Sitting properly at your computer can ease your tense muscles.

"My wrists get sore after I type for a while," said eighth semester student Fred Leyda. "When I was doing a bunch of research for one project I got a cramp in my hand from using the mouse."

Other students complained about neck problems.

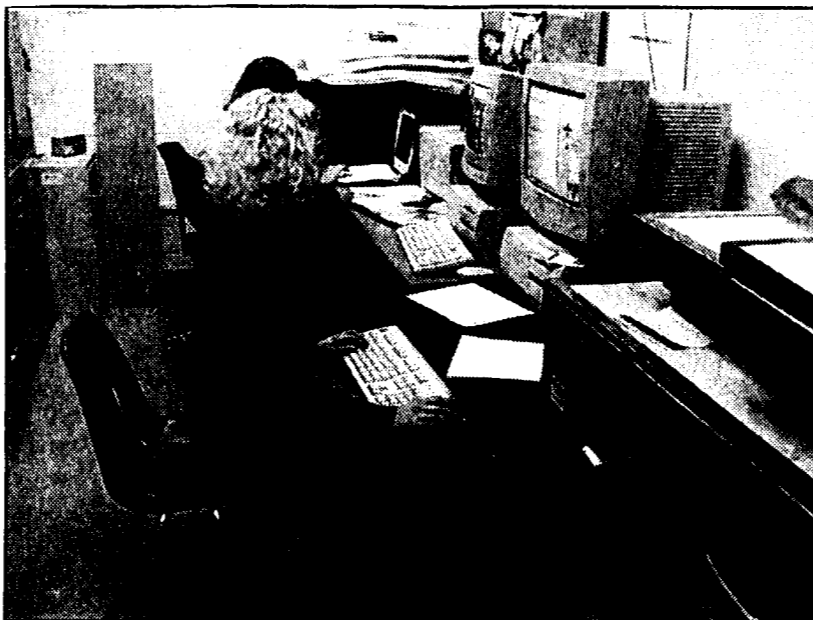
"Sometimes my neck hurts because I hold it funny whenever I sit at the computer for a long time," said sixth semester student Heather Green.

"My neck and back hurt after sitting at my computer for long periods of time," said Allison Jawdy, a fourth semester student.

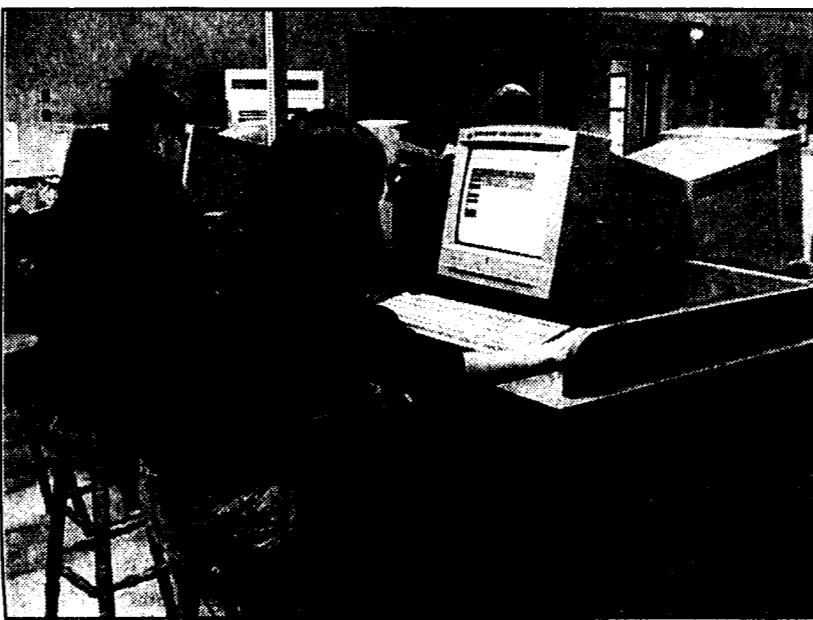
These are common complaints of people who use computers frequently. Carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis, or repetitive strain injuries as they are known, are frequently diagnosed in people who perform the same repetitive functions day in and day out.

So what can be done to prevent repetitive strain injuries? Follow these guidelines to decrease your chances of straining your muscles the next time you type a paper.

Sit up straight in your chair with both feet on the ground. Posture is the most basic, yet essential part of preventing repetitive stress injuries. The position of your entire body is important in creating a comfortable



Above, Deanna Symoski sits with back straight and feet planted firmly on the floor as she types at the keyboard. Both are key elements of good posture. Below, a student at the kiosk in Reed exhibits bad posture with an arched back and crossed legs while working at the computer.



PHOTOS BY BECKY WEINDORF

working environment. Make sure your head is as upright as possible and your forearms and upper arms are at a 90-degree angle, with your forearms parallel to the ground.

The positioning of your hands is important as well. Keep your hands and wrists as flat as possible so that they form a straight line with your forearm. Bending your wrists to the right or left as you type will cause unnecessary strain. As you sit at your computer, you may realize that keeping your wrists straight is difficult to do. If you experience pains while typing, look into purchasing an ergonomic keyboard that is shaped to allow you to properly place your hands as you type.

Something many people fail to realize is that padded keyboard or mouse pads are not for resting your wrists as you type or scroll with the mouse; the pads are there for rests when you are not typing or scrolling. Resting on pads while typing forces your fingers to do most of the work. Not only can this cause problems for your hands, but it can also cause your wrists to become unfamiliar with the typing motion.

When using your mouse, be sure to keep it close to you. Reaching across a desk causes unnecessary movements that can be damaging over time. Also, try to adjust the mouse setting so that the pointer moves as quickly as you are comfortable with, thus eliminating extra wrist movement. Another thing people commonly do is to keep

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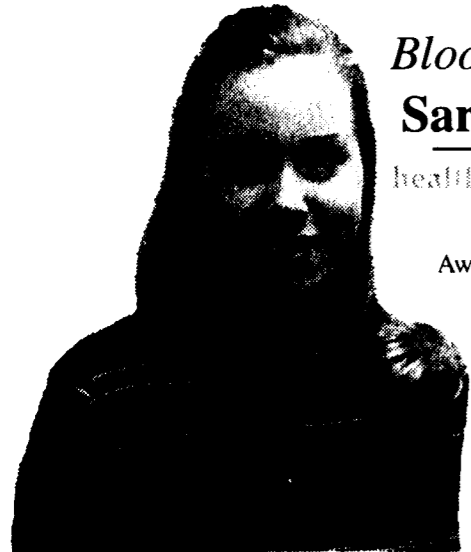
-Heather Green,  
a sixth semester student

their hands on the mouse the entire time they are using the computer. When you are not using the mouse, remove your hand from it and relax your arm in your lap. You will be amazed at the strain you can take off your arm by doing this.

Finally, place your monitor at a comfortable position in front of you. Having the monitor off to the side or tilted the wrong way can have painful consequences.

Long hours in at a desk are going to be unavoidable for many students in the next couple weeks. Next time, take a minute or two to make yourself comfortable before you start your work. If you know you will still be sitting there a few hours later, you will be happy you took every precaution to make yourself comfortable ahead of time.

## Good health is no laughing matter, or is it?



Blood, Sweat, and Tears

Sarah Orr

health page editor

we overlook, National Humor

Awareness month is definitely one that deserves our attention. We owe it to ourselves and each other to take time out of our hectic college schedules to laugh.

I'm sure you're wondering how humor and health are related. The benefits of laughter can be experienced

physically, emotionally, and mentally. I've come up with a list of reasons to incorporate laughter into your everyday life.

The act of laughing has several physical implications. So you don't want to "hoof it" on the stepper or the treadmill at the gym? That's all right. Did you know that 20 seconds of laughing is equivalent to three minutes of cardiovascular exercise, according to *The World's Greatest Treasury of Health Secrets*? Laughing also gives the

abdominal muscles a wonderful workout by contracting and relaxing, as well as the legs, back, respiratory, and facial muscles between bouts of the giggles. According to the website, *Laugh Out Loud to Good Health*, biking for 15 minutes or 10 minutes on a rowing machine is equal to laughing approximately 100 times.

Laughing can also dramatically improve your mood and put a smile on a glum face. There are many beneficial effects of humor on the emotions. Laughter is just the physiological response to humor. Humor can lighten your mood and provides an easy way to get in touch with your feelings, and break from stressful situations such as the pressures of work, relationships, or illness. Laughter releases hormones into the body that produce and overall feeling of "happiness."

Laughing can also boost the body's immune system. While laughing, Gamma-interferon cells, which are disease-fighting proteins, are increased. T-cells and B-cells are released as well. It also increases the concentration of salivary

immunoglobulin A, which protects the body from infectious diseases in the respiratory tract. When merry, the body's blood pressure is reduced because vascular blood flow and oxygenation increase, which promotes healing. Coughing and hiccupping induced by laughter can dislodge mucus plugs that have built up in the respiratory tract. Some also believe that laughter plays a key role in preventing heart disease, which is thought to be caused in part by fear and anger.

So now that you know why laughing is good for you, what can you do to make it a part of your everyday life? You should start small. Tell a friend a good joke, but be sure that it is a joke that will not offend the receiver. Smile often and at others. Smiling is contagious. Try laughing at things you would ordinarily not find humorous. Be optimistic, and if you find something amusing, don't try to suppress your response. Most of all be sure to spread the joy to those around you. Laughter loves nothing more than company.

## 'Creating' more muscle?

by Rob Wynne  
wire service editor

chology Department

Creatine has quickly become the latest trend in the weightlifting world. Offering optimal results within a short period of time, this lean mass builder avoids some of the medical problems that steroids create. Mark McGwire used the stuff, and he hit more than 65 home runs last year. Look closely at his forearms sometime - they are about as big as an average person's thigh. Other regular consumers will most likely notice a muscle mass increase as well.

But, as with any other supplement, there are always some downsides. Based upon some personal experience and a little bit of research, I hope to offer a little bit of information for those who may be deciding whether or not they want to invest in the stuff.

First, creatine is no more expensive than a jug of whey protein. For about \$25, I was able to purchase a canister of the popular MetRx Creatine. It's in a smaller canister, but only one scoop per 16 oz. of water was needed. The orange flavor was not quite appealing, but I usually managed to get it down the hatch. From there, it was off to the gym where I exploded with energy. That's probably one of the biggest immediate responses - the energy boost. In essence, this boost will allow the individual to practice more reps and more sets, offering a greater tolerance before muscle failure.

Since a muscle teardown goes on, something must rebuild the muscles to ultimately increase the mass. That's where I encountered an appetite like no other. My calorie intake rose drastically, and I was still always hungry. But, that's part of the cycle - that quick build-up of muscle mass has got to come from somewhere.

Also, some studies lean toward other notions to explain one's bulking up.

"Claims regarding increase in muscle mass are likely linked to retention of water," concluded a study at Vanderbilt University's Health Psy-

chology Department. The Vanderbilt report also stated that in another school's study, no performance increase was seen between two groups of rowers - one which took the creatine supplement and one which did not. The report also said the same of two sprinters. In that study, neither sprinter did any better while on the supplement.

Creatine may not increase performance in aerobic activities, but it does build lean muscle mass. I managed to increase my bench press by about 40 pounds during a six-to-eight week time period. I was benching 210 and I only weighed 180. Now that I'm off of the supplement, I weigh 195 and my max is about 200. I find it very difficult to make noticeable increases; the energy boost definitely helps.

Many rumors circulate about creatine. Some people claim that it increases blood pressure, causes kidney or even carpal tunnel syndrome. Others suggest that creatine can stunt growth if taken too young. One person claimed he came down with a bout of gastroenteritis after taking it, but that's not to say that the supplement is as safe.

Because creatine is relatively new on the market, long-term effects remain unknown. I also don't see parents and coaches recommending it as a supplement for their young athletes. All in all, creatine has a negative connotation.

The effects seem to be short-lived and have a possible placebo effect. Many people who use creatine claim to have gained three cleaning that they didn't also add to the hype surrounding creatine monohydrate, the most common form.

It's up to you, now.

For more information about the Vanderbilt study, visit [www.vanderbilt.edu/psychology/health/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/psychology/health/).

## MEDICINE YOU WON'T FIND IN A DRUGSTORE

He who laughs, lasts.  
-Mary Pettibone Poole

Sex is nobody's business except the three people involved.  
-Unknown

My karma ran over your dogma.  
-Unknown

Success is women you don't even know walking around your house.  
-Saturday Night Live

We've upped our standards. Up yours.  
-Pat Paulsen

Exercise daily. Eat wisely. Die anyway.  
-Unknown

Let a smile be your umbrella, because you're going to get soaked anyway.  
-Unknown

Some guy hit my fender, and I said to him, "Be fruitful and multiply," but not in those words.  
-Woody Allen

If you don't go to other people's funerals, they won't go to yours.  
-Unknown

Most weightlifters are biceptual.  
-John Rostrni

People who think they know everything are very irritating to those of us who do.  
-Unknown