

Occupational Health Unit and Health & Safety Team

Working from Home DSE Quick fixes

This information leaflet aims to show you how a work station should be set up and how we can help to achieve this at home often without specialist equipment. Some staff have underlying health conditions requiring specialist equipment at work and if working from home for a longer term, you may need to discuss any issues with your manager

The standard work station set-up and suitable posture



Problems commonly encountered with home working are:

- Chair not adjustable
- Screen too low for user's field of vision due to using laptop of low surface
- No separate mouse or keyboard when raising laptop
- Poor foot support
- Lack of movement



*Some of the information and diagrams in this document were sourced from Posturite, an ergonomics specialist company.

Chair

Firstly, we need to consider the chair we use. A suitable chair should sustain us in a suitable position and provide back support by

- supporting the curves of your back and taking some of the load
- forearms should be level with the desk
- hips should be above knees

Chair not adjustable? - To make you chair suitable you can

- use cushions, booster seats or pillows to raise you to the right height.
- Use cushions or rolled up towel to support your lower back



Poor foot support - Use an old large book, ream of paper, plastic box or tin.

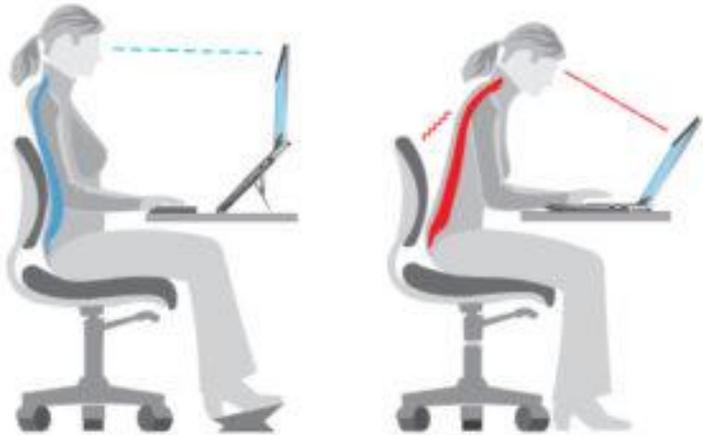


Screens

Screen position – When considering screen position, we aim to be able to read the information and encourage good position.

Usually achieved by:

- Centrally positioned the monitor
- Approximately arms' length away
- Top of display at eye height, tipped slightly bottom closer than the top



Screen too low for your field of vision due to using laptop on low surface?

Raise the screen so the top of the screen is at eye level using:

- Laptop or surface raiser
- Plastic box
- Pile of books or a box with tray on top



- **NB: Ensure when raising laptops, they are raised on a heat resistant surface to prevent overheating and fire risk**



Desktop Equipment

Keyboards and mouse – When considering the desktop equipment, we aim to enable efficient communication with device whilst encouraging suitable positioning.

Achieved by:

- Using a suitable device
- positioned so arms are relaxed by the body
- wrist and hand in neutral relaxed postures

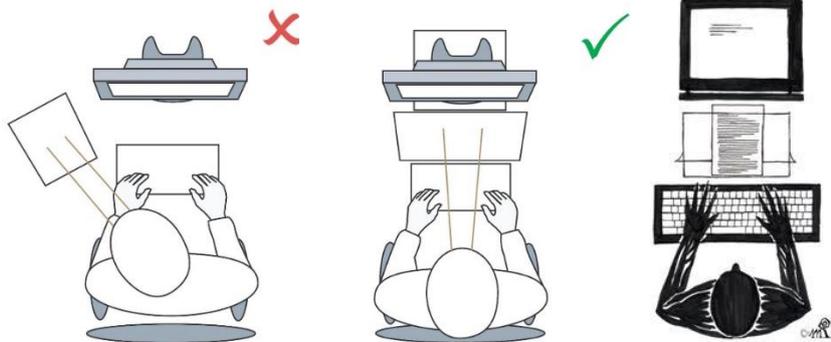
If you do not have a separate mouse or keyboard when raising laptop

- Try to borrow a keyboard and mouse or you may want to purchase your own. Check with your manager if the department has any spare equipment to loan
- If you can't get one you will need to take more care about rotating your tasks and taking small breaks

Document Holders

Viewing paperwork flat on the desk can lead to neck, shoulder and back strain causing a curved posture in the back and a tilted neck position. Many of us will put our documents to the side of the computer on the desk. This leads to twisting of the neck and back when reading the document, putting strain on our body.

Document holders are an invaluable desk top accessory to avoid a downward viewing angle when referencing paperwork.



Try resting your document on a placemat for example, between the keyboard and the raised laptop so that the paperwork can be positioned at a comfortable viewing level and improve posture.

Lack of movement - This is your responsibility.

Holding postures exert forces on muscles and tendons, which contributes to fatigue. This occurs because not moving causes tension within the muscles reducing blood flow that brings nutrients and oxygen to the muscles and to carries away the waste products.

Static posture = Fatigued muscles = Injury = Pain

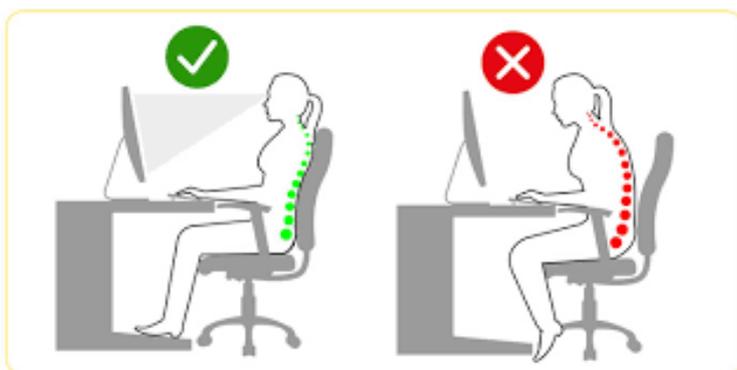
Consider what tasks can be done away from the workstation such as taking phone calls, writing notes, reading and thinking. Also consider alternating between working from a sitting position to a standing position

The worse your position the more you must move to keep yourself healthy and productive

An improvised workstation



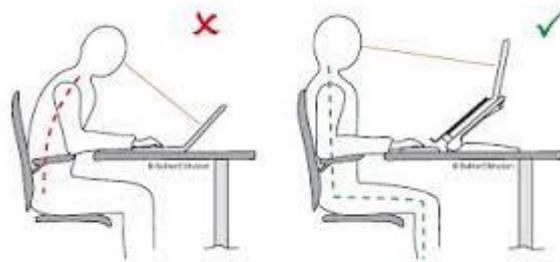
What to check if you have back discomfort?



- Check your sitting height are your elbows about keyboard height with your forearms level
- Check your feet supported
- Make sure your back is supported
- Make sure you are NOT leaning forwards
- Taking suitable breaks and move frequently

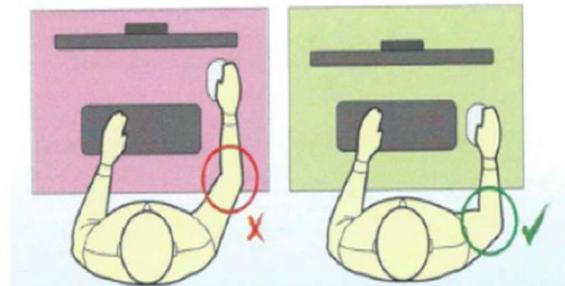
What to check if you experience neck discomfort?

- Screen position –is it too far away or to one side?
- Screen height-is it too low/ high?
- Is glare or reflection causing poor postures
- Are you leaning or reaching forwards?
- Are you taking suitable breaks and changes of activity throughout the day?



Things to check if you have upper limb pain?

- Forearm and wrist position; should be level and neutral
- Hands relaxed
- Shoulder position; are your upper arms relaxed by your side?
- Are you symmetrical and supported?
- Check for repetitive/awkward movements?
- Sufficient breaks/movement



Things to check if eye discomfort?

- Check that your screens are at a suitable, height and distance and angled with no reflections.
- Look into the distance regularly to vary range of focus about every 20 mins.
- Is your lighting suitable?
- At break times rest your eyes



Eye-gonomics



- Your blink rate is 66% less when using computers which can cause dry, red or sore eyes and headaches
- Be aware when you aren't blinking enough and try to blink more frequently
- Apply the 20-20-20 rule – every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break and look at something 20 feet away.

Breaks and activity

No matter how good the set-up, we need to move therefore breaks/changes of activity are vital:

- To encourage movement and reduce static posture and fatigue
- To rest the eyes
- To assist in stress control

How long should we aim work for in each situation?

Good DSE Setup - Movement and eye breaks every 20mins; bottom off seat at least each hour

Compromised Laptop/Tablet set up - Break away every 15mins

Mobile Device (low input) - Swap and move the hands, shoulders, and neck at least every 5 mins; break from work at least every 15 mins.

Electrical safety

With a considerable increase in home working, possibly combined with child care and education at home, there is likely to be an increased number of electrical appliances in use within the home at certain times of the day. Overuse of multi-way adapters or adapter blocks increases the risk of fire, even though there is space to plug in four appliances, this does not necessarily mean it is always safe to do so.

Staff are encouraged to visit the web links below to understand how the potential risks associated with overloading sockets can be reduced.

Overloading mains electrical sockets

The [Electrical Safety First](#) website has useful information about simple steps you can take to reduce those risks. There is also a useful calculator that you can use to check whether you are overloading sockets with your appliances.

Extensions and leads

The more wall sockets you have in your home the less you will need an extension cable or adapter. However, many portable electrical items like lamps and radios are supplied with relatively short cables so sometimes it is unavoidable but [beware of the dangers](#). Guidance on user checks portable electrical equipment can be found in Appendix 1 of [Electricity at Work Health and Safety Code of Practice](#)

Summary

Consider what you need to do and choose the right place

- **Set up the best you can**
- **Move – the worse the position the more you must move**
- **Be creative enjoy the advantages**
- **Any concerns –raise them as soon as possible with your manager**

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