

Back Care for Office Workers

Make your computer “back friendly”

Sitting badly in front of a computer for hours is going to cause back pain. The body can't tolerate being in one position for a long period of time before it feels the need to adjust. Positioning of your office furniture and equipment to ensure a good posture is essential. Repeatedly performing the same movement can lead to muscle fatigue or injury, especially if you are poorly positioned. Try these simple tips:

- Look straight ahead. Make sure your monitor is at arms length directly in front of you without having to turn. When working on a document, the top line of the text should be just below eye level. If you change the position of your chair you will need to adjust the monitor as well.
- Keyboard in front with your shoulders relaxed. Turn your chair sideways to check that your elbow is level with the spacebar for the correct height.
- Avoid “mouse shoulder”. Putting the mouse too high or too far away puts the shoulder in an awkward position causing muscle strain from the neck to the upper back. Make sure you can use your mouse without stretching and with your elbow comfortably bent.
- Avoid using laptops for long periods of time unless you have a separate keyboard, mouse and raised screen.



GOOD POSTURE
Use of a lumbar roll

Your chair

- By law chairs used at workstations must meet a certain minimum standard – they should be stable and allow the user easy freedom of movement. This means that the height must be adjustable and the seat back is adjustable in both height and tilt.
- When sitting your thighs should be at right angles to your body or sloping slightly down. Your feet should be firmly on the floor, but if its more comfortable use a footrest. Plant your feet and support your back.
- Sit with your back as straight as possible and your shoulders back to avoid hunching over your work station. Ensure your buttocks touch the back of your chair and use a lumbar roll if needed.

Keep moving!

- Don't sit in one posture for a long period of time – the human body is not designed for this, even in a good posture. Get up and move around and try and shift your position at least every 45 minutes.
- Use telephone calls as an excuse to move. Use lunch breaks to go for a walk and take the stairs whenever possible.
- See our information sheet on *exercises for office workers*.

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