

## Ergonomic Tips for Home Works to Maximize Comfort and Prevent Injury

Individuals across the globe are working from home, many for the first time, as an alternative to work in the office. This has provided workers with flexibility to complete work and keep in touch with the office from almost anywhere in the world. The use of laptops or tablets as a primary computer, combined with poor workstation set up, and mobile phone use, can contribute to discomfort and injury.

Why? The use of devices may require us to work in postures for prolonged periods of time that overuse muscles and tendons of the neck, shoulders, back, arms and hands. This can result in over-fatigue and injury. Protect yourself by following the principles presented in this document.

### NEVER WORK LIKE THIS!



*Forward head posture contributes neck and shoulder discomfort; keyboard too high and monitor too low causes low back, neck and shoulder discomfort.*

### TRY TO WORK LIKE THIS!

## Set Up an Ergonomic Workspace

These tips come courtesy of Steve Meagher, from ergonomics consulting firm Site Solutions.



Use this photo as a general guide to make sure you are sitting with relaxed, supported posture.

## Important Considerations for Working on a Desktop Computer

- Find a comfortable chair to sit back in when working. Ideally, it should be height adjustable.
- The monitor should be at a distance that allows you to view the screen easily while keeping your head straight, ear in line with your shoulder, and not leaning forward. Move the monitor closer if needed. The top of the screen should be at your eye level so that you can see the screen without tilting your neck up or down.
- Reduce glare on the screen by positioning it at a right angle to windows and away from harsh overhead lighting
- The height of the keyboard should allow your shoulders to be relaxed, elbows bent at a 90 degree angle, and your wrist straight. You may need to raise your chair, and place something under your feet or sit on a cushion to raise your seated arm height. Or, consider a lapdesk so you can sit with your feet flat on the floor and have your keyboard and mouse placed securely on your lap. Many office supply vendors carry low cost lap desk devices.
- If your keyboard surface places pressure at the wrist, you can roll up a hand towel to make wrist support. This should help your wrists stay straight.

## Important Considerations for Working on a Laptop Computer

The laptop attaches the keyboard and monitor together and contributes to neck and shoulder discomfort. The monitor should be at the correct height for your eye level and the keyboard/mouse at the right level to allow relaxed arm posture.

- Find a comfortable chair to sit back in when working. You should feel back support.
- Place the screen on a table or desk in front of you and at an elevated height so that the top of the screen is at or near eye level to lessen neck angle.
- Use a separate keyboard and mouse. Position both so that they are at elbow height.
- Take regular breaks off of the computer – 5 minutes per hour



Examples of Low Cost Lap Desks available from Office Supply Vendors



*A 3 ring binder placed with the wide section away from you on your lap can become a lapdesk.*



**Mobile, easy to use laptop stands for elevating the screen (left Contour laptop stand, right mStand by Rain Design).**

### **Examples of Ergonomic Laptop Set Up**



***Using a lapdesk for keyboard and mouse with laptop screen on table in a laptop stand.***



***Using a detachable keyboard and mouse with laptop up on reams of paper***



**Laptop use at couch – pillow behind for support, lapdesk for keyboard and mouse, and laptop screen raised and at correct distance.**

## **Tablets and Mobile Phones**

The increased use of mobile devices such as tablets and mobile phones has led to increased neck and hand/thumb discomfort.

- If you use a tablet, at a minimum, position it in a stand so that the screen is angled up to minimize bending your neck and head forward. Even better is the use of a separate keypad.
- Hold your mobile phone up to eye level to avoid bending your head down.
- Avoid holding the device when reading by propping it up. Increased thumb discomfort has been identified in individuals who read on e-readers, such as kindles or tablets. You can prop this device in your lap on a pillow and use the pillow to tilt up the screen.

## **Simple Stretches for Home Computer Users: These are easy to do anywhere (once per hour is suggested).**

- Spread the fingers of your hands apart while keeping your wrists straight. Hold for five seconds and repeat five times.
- Lean slightly forward and squeeze your shoulder blades together by bringing your elbows behind your back. Keep your shoulders lowered. Hold for five seconds and repeat five times.
- Turn your head and look back over your right shoulder and then left shoulder. Repeat five times.
- Stand up and put your hands into the small of your back and arch or extend your back slightly. Hold for five seconds and repeat five times.
- Look 20 feet away to give your eyes a break. Another break for your eyes is to cover them with your hands for approximately one minute so they do not have to work.