

## Advice and tips on setting up your 'Home Office'

Many OUH employees have been asked to work from home to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Much of the focus has been on getting the practicalities such as VPN/IT access for staff to use with their home software. Another priority is your comfort and wellbeing, including your musculoskeletal health.

Hopefully many of you will have completed the OUH DSE e-learning package and are familiar with the principles of safe Display Screen Equipment (DSE) use. The risks of developing a musculoskeletal problem whilst working at home however are increased.

The HSE DSE law enforces the importance of good ergonomics for workers at home and at work.

The types of risks associated with spending hours at your computer include:

- lower and upper back pain
- neck pain
- arm and wrist pain
- exacerbation of pre-existing problems, such as a slipped disc.

These risks can be increased when working from home as our home set-up is often not a dedicated workspace. A few simple adaptations can however greatly lower your risks, improve your comfort and prevent aches and pains.

If you are working from home and need advice on working with what you have got, follow these tips.

### **Use your laptop safely**

If possible dock the laptop and use a larger screen that is at eye level height (Photo 1) or alternatively raise the laptop using a riser or a pile of books (Photo 2). You need to avoid bending forward with your neck and upper back to view the screen, and you need to use a separate keyboard and mouse.

Photo 1: Dock your laptop and use your desktop PC screen



Photo 2: Raise the laptop on books and use a separate keyboard and mouse



### Take your keyboard and mouse home

Check with your manager first, but if you are going to be using a laptop for prolonged periods at home and you don't have access to a desktop PC, you will need to raise the screen and use a separate keyboard and mouse. Using a separate keyboard and mouse will keep your arms relaxed and not reaching forward.

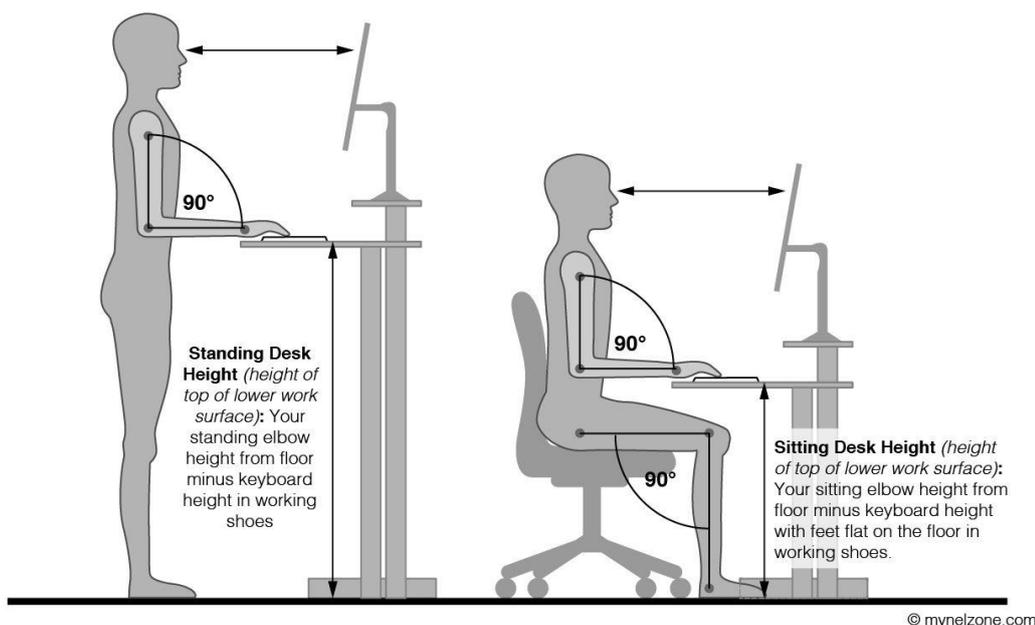
### Prepare your chair

If you are using a dining chair, or any other chair that is not an adjustable office chair, you will probably need to improve its support. A rolled-up towel or small cushion can be used to support your lower back – you are trying to maintain the lower back curve and avoid slouching. If you do have an adjustable chair, then please make sure you get familiar with all the controls and adjust to get the most support.

### Adjust your work 'desk' height

The height of your home table and desk will affect your sitting comfort. Try and have your forearms level with the table and elbows at 90 degrees. Raise yourself up with cushions and have your feet supported on a box.

Photo 3: Optimum positions for sitting and standing using a PC/laptop



### **Remember to move**

If you are feeling tension and aches building up, try to move around at least every hour to keep the blood and oxygen flowing. If you are using a laptop you could use it in the kitchen or on a chest of drawers and stand for 10-30 minutes, ideally using a riser, separate keyboard and mouse. Obviously if you have some outdoor space and the sun is out, work at your patio table and get some fresh air.

### **Avoid the sofa slouch**

If you can't resist the sofa, or this is your only option, then try to reduce the risks. Use plenty of cushions to provide support for your back, use a cushion, books or lap tray to raise your laptop up and protect you from the heat. Stand and stretch regularly to reduce tension and aches building up.

Photo 4: Avoid unsupported positions



Photo 5: Use a laptop tray and sit supported



### **Look after your shoulders and wrists**

Keep your keyboard and mouse close – try to avoid stretching forward and overreaching as this will build tension around your neck and shoulders. Keep your wrists relaxed and straight and remember to relax your shoulders.

### **Use your mobile or home phone safely**

Avoid cradling the phone in your neck and where possible use a headset / hands free / speaker phone.

### **Listen to your body**

Your body enjoys movement, so try and get up and move for five minutes every hour. Run up and down the stairs, do some simple stretches and get out in the fresh air (safely). Without your commute some of you will be missing your usual walk / cycle to work and it is important to exercise. There are many YouTube exercise videos. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.

### **Further advice**

Please look after yourself and remember to take frequent short breaks from working.

If you need further advice please get in touch with **Julie Kelly**.