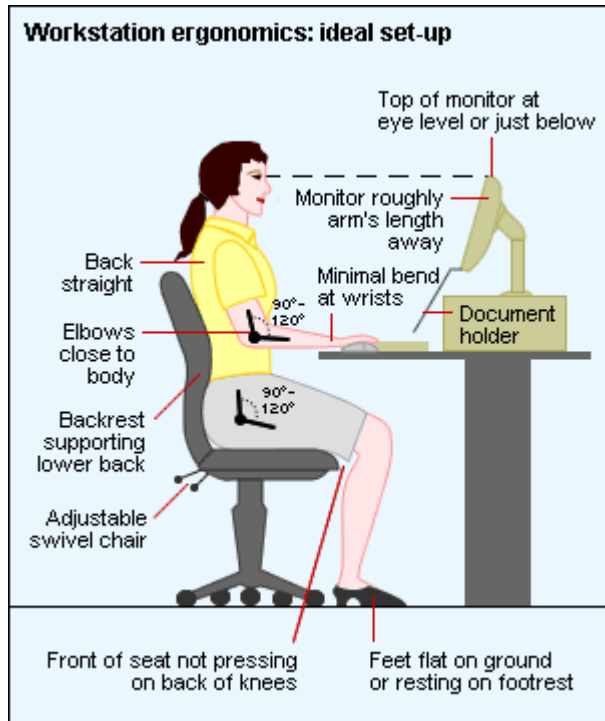


Good Desk Posture

The picture below shows good desk posture. Compare it to your normal desk posture and see how you shape up. **Remember good posture is vital to avoiding pain and discomfort.**



A lot of us are spending more and more time sitting at a desk in front of a computer so it is surprising how poorly most of our work stations are set up. Even at home we need to be aware that good posture can make a difference to our lives.

In the last 5 years I have seen a slow increase in the amount of shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand pain by people who spend a lot of time at work or at home (or both) using computers so I hope these tips on how your desk should be set up will help.

Your Feet

Your feet should be flat on the floor or on a foot rest if the chair height means you can not reach the floor with your feet. If your legs are hanging down it puts stress on your back and pulls you forward on your seat into an incorrect posture. If you need your chair up higher due to the desk height then use a foot stool to place your feet on.

Hips and Knees

Your knees should be a little below your hips or at the worst level with your hips. You may need a wedged cushion to achieve this posture but it is much more comfortable. The end of the seat should not push into the back of your knees.

Bottom

You need to sit right back in your chair with your bottom firmly wedged in. This allows the posture support of the back of the chair to support your low back and improve your posture. Do not perch on the front of the chair under any circumstances, sit back in the chair and move it closer to the desk.

Back

Your lower back should be supported by the backrest of the chair and your upper back should be upright and straight. This will help to stop upper back and shoulder pain.

Elbows and Wrists

Your elbows should be at a right angle or slightly down sloping with your wrists a little below your elbows. Your wrists should have minimal bend and you should not be resting your weight on the wrists while typing or using the mouse. Your keyboard should be directly in front of you and the screen to stop you from twisting your body to reach it.

Head and Neck

The top of your monitor should be at eye level so you can look at the whole monitor with minimal head movement. If it is too high or low then having to look up or down for periods of time puts strain on your neck and can cause pain. The monitor should be straight in front of you so you are not looking to the side and twisting your spine.

The Mouse

Your mouse should be kept close to your body and is ideally placed right next to the keyboard. If you are reaching out to the mouse you are causing a lot of strain on your whole arm and upper back and in my experience is the number one reason for office related shoulder and arm pain. A wireless mouse makes it a lot easier to keep it close with minimal disruption to the functioning of your desk.

The Desk

The desk should be at about belly button height or just a little below this level to allow the elbows and wrists to be in the correct position while using the keyboard and mouse. You may need to raise your chair to get it to this height but don't forget your feet need support when you do.

Move About

While sitting it is impossible to maintain this ideal posture for long periods of time. We shift about and move to ease pressure areas on our bottoms and move our feet into different positions from time to time as well. This is a good thing and should be encouraged but it can be done while maintaining the basics of good seating position. **Remember good posture is vital to avoiding pain and discomfort.** You should also get up at least once every hour and walk around or do a small chore to ease the pressure on your body.

The Phone

If you are on the phone a lot get a headset to avoid having your neck over to one side as we all tend to lean to the side when talking.

Laptop Computers

Laptops were designed for short term and mobile use and not to be used all the time. The keyboard is too small and the screen too low to be using it all day while sitting at a desk. There are 2 options to fix this. You can get a laptop stand that has a wireless keyboard and raises the height of the screen. This means your keyboard becomes a comfortable size again. The second option is to plug your laptop into a monitor, keyboard and mouse at your workstation and use it like a desktop computer. I would

suggest wireless keyboard and mouse as they are easy to use and can be moved into the correct position easily (and then moved away if you need the desk for something else).

For more great advice like this go to:

Parramatta Allied Health's website

<http://www.parrahealth.com.au/>