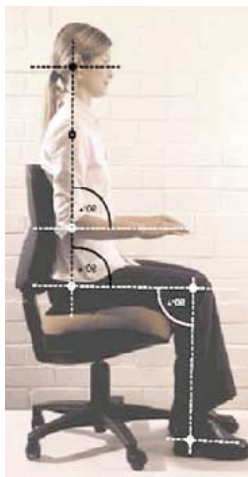


Getting the best from your workstation



advice and suggestions from seatedmassage

The chair



Probably the most important part of your workstation set up is your seating/chair. Get this right and 80% of your battle against a poorly designed workstation is won!

You should be sitting right back in your chair, not perched off the front. The back of your chair should not be pushing you forward – it should only feel as if a hand is gently supporting your lower back. Pull your chair in, so that your fingers/hands

comfortably reach your keyboard and that your back and shoulders are straight and, as mentioned, supported by the back of your chair. Use the forward tilt on your chair only if you need to, so that your knees are about 20-30 degrees and as much as 45 degrees lower than your hips.

If you do not have a tilt option on your chair, you could try using a 'wedge cushion' to give you some extra lift at the back of your seat. If needed, use a footrest. Place it directly in front of your chair and try to have it flat, rather than tilted at an angle. The ideal is for you to be sitting flat on a level chair seat, with your feet flat on the floor.

Unfortunately, footrests etc are needed for some people as desk height is often fixed. Vote 1 for adjustable height desks..some workplaces do have them.

The idea is to try to encourage you to sit on your 'sit bones' at the base of your pelvis, rather than on your sacrum, which sadly, is more often the case. Sitting on your 'sit

bones' will force you to sit correctly and importantly, effortlessly. Please play around with this. Try the different adjustments on your chair. Surprisingly, the majority of people don't know how to use the adjustments on their chairs. If you don't know – ask someone to show you. You'll be amazed at what a difference correct or better seating at your workstation can make to your energy levels and overall productivity!

The monitor

Both a PC monitor and laptop screen should be at eye level.

You should only need to move



your eyes to see the screen, not your head, with your line of vision focussing on the top third of the screen. Having to look up or down puts strain on your neck and muscles to your head, which can lead to headaches and believe it or not, back strain. Raise or lower your monitor using a monitor stand or preferably, the plastic blocks that are widely available. Ask your employer to provide them for you.

Your monitor should sit squarely in front of you, not to the right or left, but straight in front. Looking to the side, together with other bad habits, will twist the spine and neck soft tissues and when done constantly, will have an adverse affect on these areas of the body in a very short space of time.

Unfortunately, not a lot of us are given much desk space by our employers and we are limited with what we are able to do with the monitor. You should not have to strain to see your monitor or the text/content contained within. Move the monitor closer or position it further away if need be. Ask your employer for a screen if your monitor is too bright and cannot be further adjusted or if your workplace lighting is too bright and reflects off your screen.

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The keyboard

Your keyboard should be straight in front of you and easy to reach. Your wrists should be fairly straight – see the red line in the picture on the front cover. You may want to request a wrist support, which lies in front of the keyboard and can offer great support. This will depend on you, your desk and your chair. For instance, do you have armrests? Many people use them to 'rest' their arms and wrists on, if they are at the correct height and suitable for the type and style of keyboard you have. Some offer much greater support than others do.

Please do not use the space directly in front of you to write by pushing your keyboard away from you! This will work against you very quickly. There's not much point in having your workstation adjusted if get into this habit. Use the space provided either side of your computer. You no doubt have a swivel chair, so use it! Swivel to write when you need to! The space directly in front of you is reserved solely for the use of your keyboard and wrist support if you use one.

The mouse

A client at Compaq once calculated he made more than two thousand mouse 'clicks' per day. That's a staggering amount! What may seem a fairly innocuous action for my client was turning into a severe case of RSI. Many other factors made up his problem, but the use of his mouse, the position of it on his desk and most importantly, how he gripped it, were the main contributors.



The mouse should be at easy reach of your hand. You should not need to stretch for it and you should not have your arm tucked right into your side. Like all other pieces of equipment, if you can get hold of an 'ergonomic' mouse (easier for the hand to 'cup') please do so. It will make a huge difference. Again, most workplaces provide the cheapest and most basic of equipment not realising the damage it can cause to staff. Don't let the weight of your arm rest on the underside of your wrist. There are special mouse pads with a gel wrist rest which can provide great support. Again, ask your employer if you have a concern about your mouse or its shape.

With the rise in popularity of notebooks and laptops, it goes without saying that if you're using it at a desk for more than an hour, you should attach a separate keyboard and mouse. Sit the thing on top of a monitor stand (or phone books if your office is like many!), following the same rules as above.

As usual, do not do any of this by yourself. Ask a colleague to help you set it up so you can ensure it is correctly positioned. It's important to your health and well-being.

The desk



99% of desks are not adjustable in either height or angle. The desk is an important part of our workstation set up, although it's not something we can do much about changing. It's more about adjusting what we have and how we use it. Very tall people always have a hassle fitting under their desk and end up having to drop the height of their chair too far.

This problem can't be solved without a height adjustable desk. Tall people will find it very beneficial to get up regularly and stretch and/or go for a short walk. For the majority however, desk height is something that can generally be worked around.

You don't necessarily have to leave the monitor/computer set up where it is (these days, usually tucked into a corner at an angle). They are set up for ease of distributing the multitude of leads and cables running out the back of it and because it is deemed 'better' space wise, rather than for ergonomic reasons. You can move your workstation elsewhere on your desk. Clear some space and try it directly in front of you – square on. This may or may not work for you.

The key is to try different things with regard to your workstation set up. Ideally, your desk should be at about belly button level, with your elbows just below (or level with) the desktop. Once again, use the desk space you do have. Make sure that everything you regularly use on your desk is within easy reach. Write either side of your computer. Don't write directly in front, pushing your keyboard further away. If you are on the 'phone regularly or for extended periods, ask your employer for a headset. You are entitled to one.



You need to move. If you don't do it already, get up from your desk at least twice an hour (preferably every 20 minutes). You don't have to embarrass yourself by doing stretches in front of your desk. The key is, however, to 'get the blood flowing' and release that 'stuck energy' that has built up over the period you have spent sitting at your workstation. So take a short walk. Do a chore that's been hanging over your head – or just walk around the your

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office floor – 2 or 3 minutes will suffice – letting your arms hang and swing normally. Don't walk around carrying something or just walk over to the printer and back – that isn't far enough !.

This action will free up the stuck energy, get the blood flowing through to your extremities a little more freely again and most importantly, offer you the opportunity to focus your eyes on different objects at varying distances from you (as opposed to just staring at your monitor). This can significantly decrease the chances of eyestrain and tension headaches. When sitting, you can also change the position of your feet, wriggle your toes in your shoes and rock forward and back and side-to-side in your seat. It's actually a great idea to set up some sort of timer, or write yourself a note and stick it to your monitor, to indicate that 20 – 30 minutes has passed and it is time for you to get up and move. seatedmassage cannot stress highly enough the importance of movement in minimising the effects of fatigue and tension headaches. It is a simple approach, requiring very little effort. As they say at a well-known sporting company – just do it!

Employer's duty of care

Employers in Australia have a general duty of care to their employees to provide a safe and healthy work place. In the office work environment the general duty of care includes:

- * Providing appropriate equipment and safe environment
- * Ensuring reasonable time is allocated for tasks
- * Ensuring employees know how to use and adjust their equipment by providing instruction and/or training
- * Supervising to ensure the equipment is being used correctly
- * Ensuring the system of work is appropriate and not detrimental to the employee's health, safety or welfare

seatedmassage can provide your staff with individual workstation advice, set-up and corrections and postural adjustments and corrections.

**Please contact us for further details :-
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