

Desk Set-Up When Home Working



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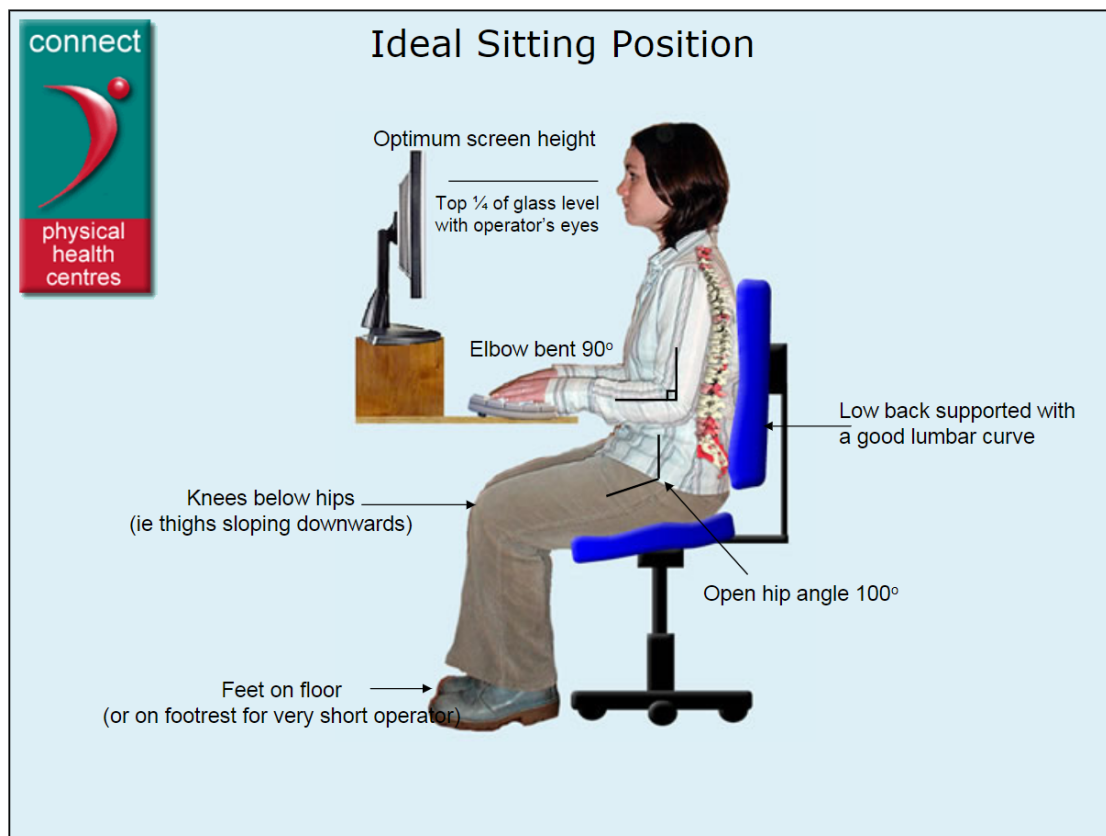
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Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic more of us will be working at home. This document provides some advice to enable you to achieve the best possible workstation set up and look after your musculoskeletal health.

I will be working from a home office

If you have a home office with a desk, chair and personal computer please try and follow the [DSE checklist](#) as far as you possibly can and try and achieve the [ideal sitting position](#) (see image below). If you can't achieve this you could try implementing some of the measures suggested in the rest of this document where relevant.



I will be working from a kitchen/dining table with a laptop/tablet

Location

Use a table and chair rather than your sofa or bed.

Sitting position

Have a look at the ideal sitting position image above. Try and mimic this as far as you can.

Chair

Try and keep your knees below your hips and an open 100 degree hip angle (see image above). As it is unlikely that you will have an adjustable chair you can try to get into an ideal sitting position using a cushion or pillow (folded in half) to sit on and a rolled up towel against your lower back for lumbar support. These measures will help to take the strain and load off your spine but only use them if they feel comfortable. If you are unsure, contact a Health and Safety Adviser (see 'Additional Help and Support' below). Make sure that your feet are planted on the floor. If you can't do this use a biscuit tin, Tupperware container or similar as a footrest. If you have a footrest at work and can take it home please do so.

Screen height

If you have a laptop or tablet stand, use this to raise your screen. If you do not have one of these, raise your laptop/tablet up using books, biscuit tins etc. as best you can. You may not achieve the ideal position but aim to raise your laptop/tablet by a minimum of 15 cm. Your eyes should naturally hit the top third of your screen when you are looking straight ahead. Even a small height adjustment should help. The goal is to avoid dropping your head as much as possible to try and avoid neck and shoulder strain.

Mouse and Keyboard

If you are raising up your laptop/tablet use an external keyboard and mouse so that you are not working with your arms too high. See if you can take your keyboard and mouse home with you, particularly if you already have ergonomic ones. Make sure that you have enough USB ports to connect these. Your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle, tucked closely to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position. This posture helps keep you from rounding your shoulders and pulling your neck muscles.

If you can't attach an external mouse and keyboard, leave your laptop in place on the table rather than raising it up but **you must take more breaks**. Try and move every 15 minutes (more on taking breaks and exercises below).

Screen Glare

If you can, try not to put your laptop/tablet directly underneath a bright artificial light. Try and use natural light as much as possible.

Taking Breaks and Exercise

Regardless of your set up, the best way to look after your musculoskeletal health is to take regular breaks and to move around as much as possible. The more 'makeshift' your set-up, the more important it is for you to move. If you have a good home office set-up, take a break for 5-10 minutes every hour. For other set-ups take a break every 15-20 minutes.

Here are some tips to help you to move more:

- Stand up every time you use the phone
- Try and do more activities away from the screen e.g. reading paperwork

- Set up a reminder e.g. a timer on your phone. You can also install apps such as Break Reminder (find it on Microsoft Store) on your computer that allow you to set reminders.

Here are some workstation exercises you can do in your microbreaks.

<https://www.posturite.co.uk/help-advice/useful-resources/learning-guides/workstation-exercises>

Webinar

We recommend that you watch this Posturite Webinar (youtube), which discusses issues around working from home with computers and will help you to put this guidance into practice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBFf1NZkJKE#action=share>

Additional Help and Support

You can find lots more advice and guidance on the [Posturite website](#). If you have any questions contact ohss-safety@ncl.ac.uk and one of the Health and Safety Advisors will be able to offer support. Alternatively, you can contact the Occupational Health and Safety Service via our [NU Health and Safety Teams group](#).

Don't forget to take your laptop charger home!