

## Computer Workstation Set-up and Use

### Purpose of this Info Sheet

This Info Sheet will help you to:

- Identify the ergonomic risks associated with working at a computer
- Set up your computer workstation to suit the work that you do, improve comfort and reduce the risk of injury
- Use computer equipment comfortably.

### Why is this important?

Problems such as fatigue, discomfort and injury to the muscles and joints arising from computer use at work are preventable.

Computer use is a core task for most workers in the healthcare sector. Computers have been used at work by healthcare administrators for many years. Increasingly, healthcare workers are required to use computers as tools to support clinical care.

Computer use these days can be complex: not everyone has their own workstation (e.g. hot desking, job share); some workstations are meant to be used when you are standing, just for a short time (e.g. looking up results). You should familiarise yourself with the information on this sheet so that you can quickly adjust any workstation to suit.

To prevent problems, there are two key things to look out for when using a computer:

1. Awkward working postures (e.g. using a keyboard with bent wrists; twisting to see the monitor; over-reaching; slouching etc)
2. Repetitive movements (e.g. typing or using a mouse continuously).

These things may not cause you a problem if they happen only occasionally and for short periods of the day.

However, you could suffer fatigue and/or discomfort in your muscles and joints if awkward postures and/or repetitive movements are **frequent** and/or **occur for long periods** of the day. This could eventually lead to you needing treatment or time off work.

The set up of the workstation can make the difference between comfortable computer work and injury. The set up directly impacts on the working postures of many of the muscles and joints, from head to toe! Good workstation set up assists you by:

- Reducing fatigue and discomfort in your muscles and joints
- Reducing the chance of an injury to your muscles and joints.

### Tips for Workstation Set-up & Use

The general hints and tips contained in this information sheet apply to all computer workstation set-ups i.e. both sitting and standing workstations.



*Example of a seated workstation*

### General Principles:

Workstation design and set-up should:

- ★ Encourage neutral, relaxed and comfortable working postures; and
- ★ Allow you to change positions frequently and avoid static postures.

A good workstation design considers your chair, lighting, noise, and the position of your monitor, keyboard, mouse and documents.

It is important to change your tasks regularly and to keep active when using a computer for more than 30 minutes at a time.

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The following image provides a simplistic illustration of some of the basic principles for workstation set-up and sitting posture.



### Seating:

There are no strict rules about how to sit, but rather some basic principles to follow. Research has shown that workers tend to be most comfortable if able to change their posture frequently.

Your chair should be adjustable, comfortable and in good working order. The minimum adjustments available on a chair should include:

- Seat height (up or down)
- Backrest height (up or down)
- Backrest tilt (forward or back)

In general office chairs have a maximum load of 115kg. If you weigh more than this, you should let your manager know. Alternative chairs are available to make sure you stay safe.

Prevent slouching by moving your bottom far enough back in the chair, ensure the feet are supported on the floor or a footrest and the backrest is supporting the curve of the lower back.

***For detailed information on how to adjust your chair and set-up your workstation, refer to the Qld Health Computer Workstation Self Assessment Checklist (email [ergonomics@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:ergonomics@health.qld.gov.au) for a copy).***

### Equipment Trials:

Equipment should be trialled before purchase to ensure it meets the required needs. For further advice on equipment options (e.g. alternative seating), it is recommended that you contact your

District Occupational Health and Safety Unit (OHS) Unit.

The following is not an exhaustive list but provides a guide for equipment options and suppliers. Consideration should be made to any relevant Qld Health Standing Offer Arrangements (SOA) when selecting equipment.

- Office Max  
Ph: 136 629.  
[www.officemax.com.au](http://www.officemax.com.au)
- SDS, Dept of Public Works  
Ph: 1800 801 123  
[www.sds.qld.gov.au/home.aspx](http://www.sds.qld.gov.au/home.aspx)
- Bendix  
Ph (07) 3268 7700  
[www.bendixqld.com.au](http://www.bendixqld.com.au)
- Commercial Furniture Australia  
Ph (07) 3266 0800  
[www.cfa-furniture.com.au](http://www.cfa-furniture.com.au)
- Ergonomics Office  
Ph 1300 555 930  
[www.ergonomicoffice.com.au](http://www.ergonomicoffice.com.au)
- PPS Australia Pty Ltd  
Ph (02) 9231 5210  
[www.ppsergo.com.au](http://www.ppsergo.com.au)
- Flexliner  
Ph 1800 6444 34
- Independent Living Centre  
[www.ilc.org](http://www.ilc.org)

### Further Information:

- ➔ Contact your District OHS Unit.
- ➔ Contact the Healthcare Ergonomics Team:  
[Ergonomics@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Ergonomics@health.qld.gov.au)
- ➔ Visit the ergonomics home-page on the Queensland Health OHS Website:  
<http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/safety/ergo/home.htm>
- ➔ Australian Standards
  - AS/NZS 4438: 1997 (Chairs)
  - AS/NZS 4442: 1997 (Office Desks)
  - AS/NZS 4443:1997 (Workstations)
  - AS3590: 1990 (Screen based workstations)
  - AS1680.2.2:2008 (Interior Workplace Lighting)
- ➔ Australasian Health Facility Guidelines  
<http://www.healthfacilityguidelines.com.au/>

### 10 TIPS WHEN USING YOUR COMPUTER.....

- ✓ *Adjust your chair:*
  - ★ *Adjust chair height so that your elbows are by your side and level with the desk or slightly above the desk.*
  - ★ *Adjust the height of the backrest to support the inward curve in your lower back*
  - ★ *The backrest angle is adjusted to a comfortable position, for most people this will be an upright or slightly reclined position.*
- ✓ *If your feet are not flat on the floor, use a footrest.*
- ✓ *Position your keyboard and monitor directly in front of you, with the monitor approximately one arms length away from you. The keyboard should be a comfortable distance from the edge of the desk to allow the forearms to be supported.*
- ✓ *The top of the monitor should be level with or slightly below eye level to avoid having to tilt the head back to look up at the screen. (N.B. If you wear bifocals you will need the screen lower).*
- ✓ *Position frequently used items within easy reach on your desk top. Position your document holder between the keyboard and monitor or beside the monitor at the same height as the screen, so as to avoid bending or twisting the neck.*
- ✓ *When using the keyboard & mouse, keep your wrists straight and shoulders relaxed.*
- ✓ *Vary your posture as much as possible. Stand or walk about, or do some stretches at least every 30 minutes (see over page for examples of stretches)*
- ✓ *Rest your eyes every 10 minutes by looking away from the screen and focussing on the distance (eg. look out a window or at a wall poster).*
- ✓ *Maintain your general fitness. Keep yourself strong and flexible.*
- ✓ *If you feel an ache or discomfort in any part of your body, check the points on this list, take a break and if the pain continues, seek advice from a health professional. It may also be useful to complete a more detailed workstation assessment using the Queensland Health Computer Workstation Self Assessment Checklist.*

#### Developed with reference to:

- Australian Physiotherapy Association Tips for Healthy Computer Use:  
[http://apa.advsol.com.au/physio\\_and\\_health/improve/tips/computer.cfm](http://apa.advsol.com.au/physio_and_health/improve/tips/computer.cfm)
- Central Coast Health Computer Workstation Fact Sheet
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland 'Ergonomic Workstations for Keyboard Operators':  
<http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/subjects/manualhandling/workstations/>
- Cook C, Burgess-Limerick R. (2003). Guidelines for Computer Workstations. *Ergonomics Australia* 17(1) pp 19-37.

### Stretch Exercises

**Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds**

Regular stretching can help to improve blood flow and reduce muscle tension and risk of injury. Perform each stretch slowly and without bouncing. If you feel abnormal discomfort, stop the stretch and consult your health professional before continuing with a stretching program.



**Neck**



**Lower Back**



**Chest**



**Upper Back**



**Forearm & Wrist**



**Triceps**