Working from Home Guidance
Using Display Screen Equipment

NetworkRail

Many of you will now need to work from home for a prolonged period. Laptops are very useful, but there are some potential risks to your health that can be avoided by following this guidance document. You may not have a dedicated home office, but here are some ideas to help you stay fit and healthy.
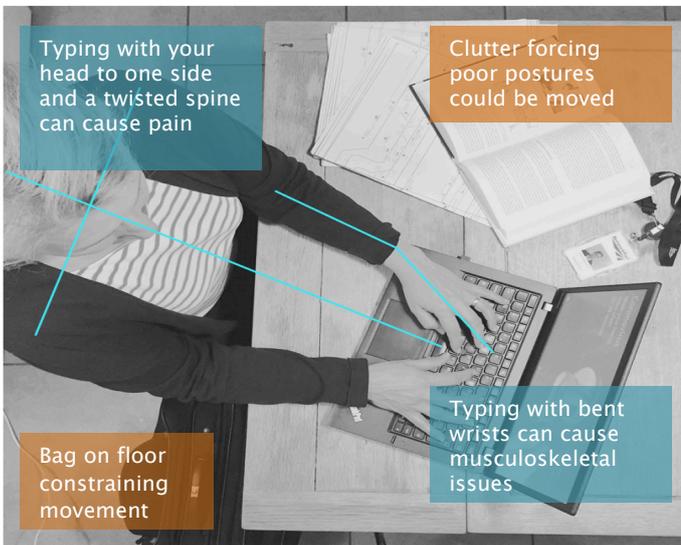

Typing with your head to one side and a twisted spine can cause pain

Clutter forcing poor postures could be moved

Bag on floor constraining movement

Typing with bent wrists can cause musculoskeletal issues

Figure 1: Make sure you are sitting correctly when using a laptop computer to reduce health risks.

Avoid tilting your head forward excessively a little is ok!

Lumbar support with rolled up towel or pillow, inside an old garment, tied around chair.

Make sure you rest your wrists allowing space in front of the keyboard

Use books to raise your laptop up.

amanoldbox

Extra height and comfort with a firm cushion
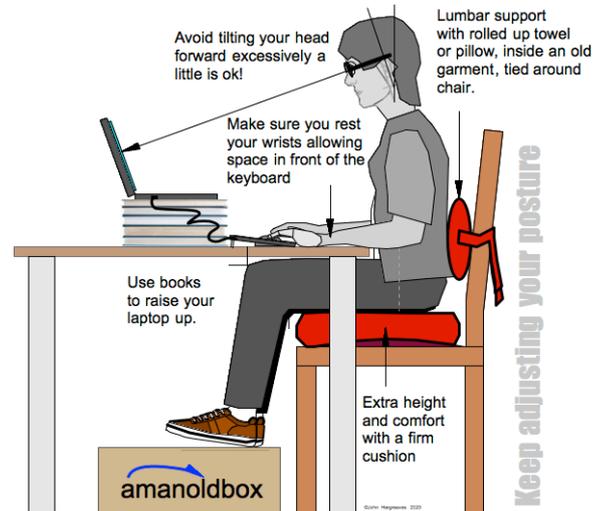
Keep adjusting your posture

Figure 2: Subtle adjustments to your workspace can really help improve your comfort and health.

Desk and Chair

It is important to try and ensure you have a dedicated workspace and reasonable working environment, considering the following points:

- Do not sit in a draft as this can be very uncomfortable and cause stiffness and muscular pain.
- Glare from lights/windows can make it hard to see the screen and negatively affect your posture.
- Keep your workspace tidy and remove non-work-related clutter for space to comfortably access your computer.
- Make sure paperwork and other items do not constrain hand movement and force a twisted posture.
- You could also use props, like books, to improve the height of your laptop, if you have a separate keyboard and mouse to plug in. Even without a separate keyboard, propping up the laptop just at the back can help raise the screen.
- If you don't have an office type chair, select a firm, upright chair, such as those used at a dining table.
- If seated upright for long periods, it is important to support your lower back. If the chair does not do this, try using a pillow, rolled up towel or small garment positioned in the small of your back (Figure 2).
- The height of the chair should allow you to rest your forearms flat on the desk and if you are seated too low, it may help to sit on a pillow (Figure 2).
- If your feet no longer can rest on the floor comfortably, try using a small box or books as a footrest.

> The top of the screen should ideally be level with the seated eye height to avoid head tilting or hunched shoulders

Laptop on your lap!

Try not to use the laptop for too long on your lap without a break, as you will find that the screen is far too low and could cause neck pain. It can help to put a pillow/cushion on your lap, with a book or tray on top to raise the screen and improve the angle of your elbows when typing. Note: Do NOT put your laptop straight on to fabric as it may overheat.

Rest breaks are important

Rest Breaks are very important whatever Display Screen Equipment you are using, and a very good way to combat musculoskeletal issues:

Avoid tilting your head forward excessively a little is ok!

Make sure you rest your wrists allowing space in front of the keyboard

Use books to raise your laptop only if you have access to a separate keyboard and mouse

Kitchen Counter

Figure 3: Standing at a kitchen counter to work.

- Change position frequently where possible to avoid muscles and joints being in the same position for several hours. It could help to move between working locations to spread the load on your neck, shoulders, lower back and arms (Figure 3).
- Try and do some exercise or movement every 1–2 hours. Breaks of 2–5 minutes per hour can offset the risk of musculoskeletal symptoms in the workplace.
- This can involve stretching at your desk, going for a short walk or even just walking up and down the stairs a few times. Try and be creative!
- Drink plenty of water and take a dedicated lunch break.

Take regular breaks and exercises, drinking plenty of water when you are working

Exercises are good for your health

Here is list of a few small exercises you can try:

1. Head Turn: Gently turn head from side to side (Repeat 3 times).
2. Lean Back: Gently extend back over backrest of chair (Repeat 3 times).
3. Wrist Stretch: Flex your wrist and hold for 5 seconds (Repeat 3 times on each hand).
4. Trunk Rotations: Gently rotate your trunk around (Repeat 3 times).
5. Shoulder Rolls: Roll your shoulder forwards (Repeat 3 times).

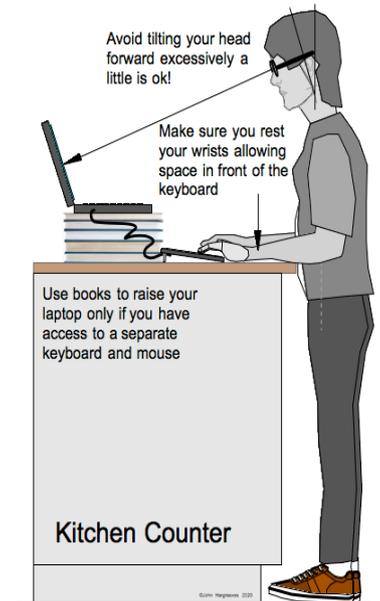Figure 4: Some examples of exercises that you can do to reduce the risks of musculoskeletal health issues.

Please click here to log onto MyCONNECT for the full list of stretching and energising exercises!