

Are you Sitting Comfortably?

An overview of sitting comfortably and sensibly in your workplace
At the time of COVID-19



Working with computers

Ofcom's annual Online Nation report reveals that in April 2020, during the height of lockdown¹, UK adults spent a daily average of four hours and two minutes online – up from just under three and a half hours in September 2019. The reality of this is likely to be

greater due to many people working from home.

How many hours to you spend? That much?!

Are you heading for COVID-19-RSI² ?

At the time of writing, Facebook recorded pictures of the writer's business friends seated at their beautiful desks, but **seriously headed for RSI (repetitive strain injury)** in their seating positions, if they don't have it already. Both were resting their forearms on their desks poised to type on their keyboard. This fixed position **will do** untold, potentially permanent damage, with the keyboard at the same height - all this at their purposely designed desks!

RSI is a painful condition.

COVID-19-RSI will mean lots of work for Osteopaths, Physios and Chiropractors, but you can be assured that they would rather this was prevented.

Have you noticed any shoulder/back twinges lately? Why is this happening and will be happening more? COVID-19 has seen huge numbers working from home and not all homes are kitted out as an office - makes sense eh? Working off the kitchen table, others from their beds.... you get the idea? Not ideal. And if that's what you've always done, you're likely to have been doing more of it lately. Ideally, your keyboard should be a different height (slightly lower) to your "writing" desk.

It is essential to be seated comfortably and to develop good working habits to avoid pain developing slowly over time without your knowing it. Healing RSI can in itself be a long and painful process. The following tips aim to provide good working habits when using a computer.

¹ Lockdown – a period of quarantine during the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020

² Repetitive Strain Injury

Laptops

It is best to avoid using a laptop on its own if full-sized equipment is available. This also includes sitting comfortably, angling the screen so it can be seen clearly with minimal reflections, and taking frequent breaks if work is prolonged. Wherever possible, laptops should be placed on a firm surface at the right height for keying in.



Can using a mouse cause problems?



Intensive use of a mouse, trackball, or similar pointing device may give rise to aches and pains in the fingers, hands, wrists, arms or shoulders. This can also happen with a keyboard. Risks can be reduced by adopting good posture and technique and a flexible approach to using both the mouse and keyboard.

Some practical tips:

Getting comfortable

- ✓ Adjust your chair and VDU (visual display unit / screen / monitor) to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your forearms should be approximately horizontal (not pointing upwards, nor resting in a fixed position on your desk, keyboard or rest pad) and your eyes the same height as the top of the VDU, at least 18" away.
- ✓ The backrest of your adjustable chair should fit neatly into the small of your back for support, ideally a chair without arm rests.
- ✓ Try different arrangements of keyboard, screen, mouse and documents to find the best arrangement for you. A document holder may help you avoid awkward neck and eye movements.
- ✓ Arrange your desk and VDU to avoid glare, or bright reflections on the screen. Try to avoid the screen directly facing windows or bright lights. Adjust any curtains or blinds to prevent unwanted light.
- ✓ Make sure there is space under your desk to move your legs freely, with feet flat to the floor. Move any obstacles such as boxes or equipment.



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- ✓ Avoid excess pressure from the edge of your seat on the backs of your legs and knees. A footrest may help - *telephone directories can be useful!*



Keying in

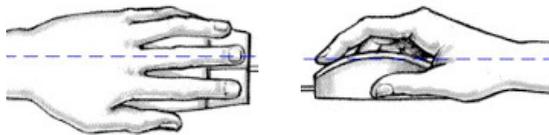
- ✓ Adjust your keyboard to get a good typing position and height.
- ✓ Try to keep your wrists straight when typing and not fixed – do not rest your wrists on the desk or similar whilst typing. Keep a soft touch on the keys and don't overstretch your fingers.

Using a mouse

- ✓ Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with the wrist straight. Sit upright and close to the desk, so you don't have to work with your mouse arm stretched. Move the keyboard out of the way if it is not being used.



- ✓ Adjust your chair and VDU.
- ✓ Don't grip the mouse too tightly.
- ✓ Rest your fingers lightly on the buttons and do not press them hard.
- ✓ If you're left-handed your mouse settings can be adjusted to make use more comfortable.



Reading the screen

- ✓ Adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the screen to suit lighting conditions in the room.
- ✓ Make sure the screen surface is clean.
- ✓ Select colours that are easy on the eye (eg avoid red text on a blue background, or vice-versa).
- ✓ Adjust the Zoom level, use **Ctrl + mouse wheel** (PC) to adjust many software packages, including viewing the Internet
- ✓ Try to avoid working with fluorescent lighting, a desk lamp or up-lighter work well. Individual characters on the screen should be sharply focused and should not flicker or move. If they do, the VDU may need servicing or adjustment.
- ✓ Try adjusting the screen resolution for more permanent changes in menu sizes.



Posture and breaks

- ✓ Don't sit in the same position for long periods. Some movement is advisable, but avoid repeated stretching to reach things you need (if this happens a lot, rearrange your workstation.)
- ✓ Take a break from the screen eg to do filing, photocopying, or *putting on the kettle!*
- ✓ And relax...



We'd love to stay in touch.
If you'd like to keep up-to-date with more Tips and news like this, just drop us a line [HERE](#)

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A few desk-side
exercises
and lose calories!

1. **Shoulder shrugs:** with arms hanging by your sides, raise your shoulders upwards and hold, then let them drop down and relax. Repeat.
2. **Neck rolls:** looking forward, slowly allow your head to relax to the left side, bringing your ear towards your shoulder, stretch and hold before straightening. Repeat with the right side. Pull your chin in and lower towards your chest, hold then turn your head slowly to the right to look over your shoulder, hold and turn back slowly to the centre. Repeat turning the left.
3. **Neck flexion:** drop your head forward, interlock your fingers and rest on head, allowing the weight of your relaxed arms to help the head towards the chest.
4. **Neck extension:** interlock your fingers behind your neck, and support it while you look slightly upwards.
5. **Reach ups:** interlock your fingers; turn your palms away from you. Straighten your arms and reach upwards over your head and slightly back as far as you can, to increase the stretch.
6. **Reach outs:** interlock your fingers with palms facing forward, push out as far as possible, allowing the shoulders to round forwards.
7. **Chest stretch:** (sit or stand) with elbows bent, interlock your fingers behind your back; straighten your arms, turning your elbows slightly in, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Gently raise your arms to increase the stretch.

8. **Side bends:** interlock your fingers behind your head. Make sure your feet are placed in line with your shoulders, and then lean over to one side to stretch. Stretch upwards with the top elbow.
9. **Back extension:** sit upright with your hands placed into the small of your back. Push your hips forwards and your shoulders back, arching the spine.
10. **Knee raise:** sitting upright, take one knee and raise it towards your chest. Hold for up to 20 seconds. Rest and repeat with the other knee.
11. **Laughter:** more and often. 15 -20 minutes a day of laughter burns 40 calories a day!
12. **Eye Exercise:** look up then down 10 times, repeat for down then up, repeat for left to right, repeat for right to left. Rotate eyes from left all the way around 10 times, repeat rolling from right.
13. If you are at your computer for long periods of time, optometrists recommend following the "20-20-20" rule ie for every 20 minutes spent focusing on your computer screen, spend 20 seconds focusing on something else 20 feet away
14. **Body Stretch:** Once an hour or so, get up from your chair and do a full body stretch. Touch your toes and extend your limbs to their fullest, and relax.
15. **Drink cold water:** Your body burns calories when it warms the water up to body temperature. Drinking 8 glasses of ice water a day burns about 60 calories. It also keeps you hydrated and alert. And remember



ARE YOU
Awesome