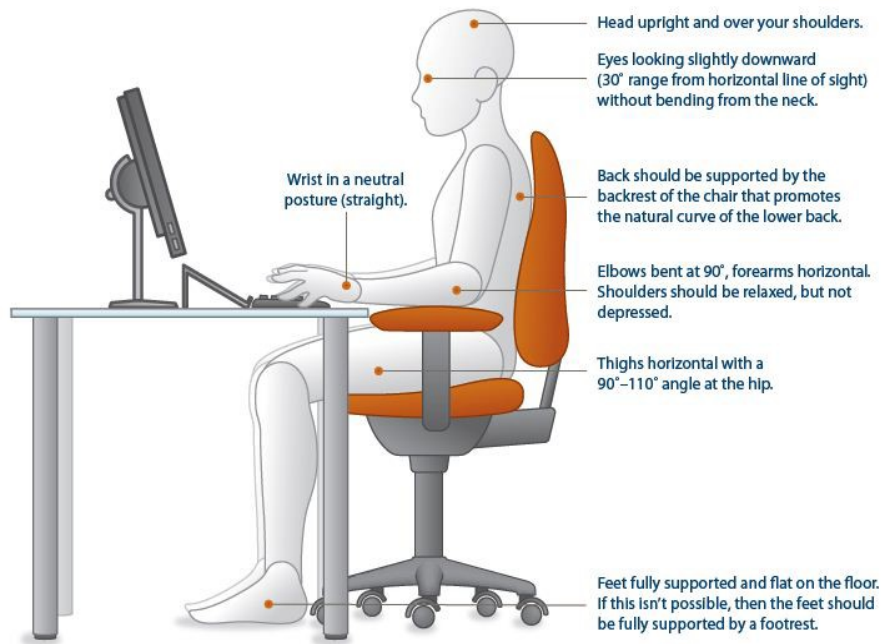# Quick Reference –
Checking Your Workstation Set-up

Most people spend more time at work than they do anywhere else. We have a range of support systems available and procedures in place to ensure staff are kept healthy and safe at all times.

Setting up your workstation properly encourages good posture and minimises risk of discomfort and injury.

**Adjust your chair** to achieve comfortable working posture as shown below:
- Elements include:
- Chair height
- Back rest
- Lumbar support
- Arm rests
- Seat pan/depth
- Stable base

Wrist in a neutral posture (straight).

Head upright and over your shoulders.

Eyes looking slightly downward (30° range from horizontal line of sight) without bending from the neck.

Back should be supported by the backrest of the chair that promotes the natural curve of the lower back.

Elbows bent at 90°, forearms horizontal. Shoulders should be relaxed, but not depressed.

Thighs horizontal with a 90°–110° angle at the hip.

Feet fully supported and flat on the floor. If this isn't possible, then the feet should be fully supported by a footrest.

Adjust your monitor to achieve a comfortable posture. This can be achieved through:
- Appropriate distance - consider your vision, font size and screen resolution.
- Height and Location – monitor directly in front with top of monitor at eye level.

Organise your desk/work surface in as illustrated below. Keep frequently used items close to you and within easy reach. Take opportunities to change posture e.g. stand to access items that are in the non-working

0°

Normal line of sight 10°–15°

Maximum line of sight angle 35°
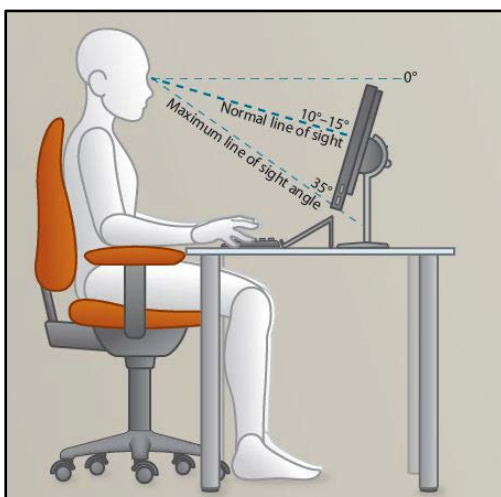
Vary your posture and take a break from sitting every 30 minutes. Rotate tasks every 2-3 hours

**Workstation Ergonomics - General**

Principles

a. Posture

Good posture is required to ensure the neck and spine do not carry more weight than necessary.

Sustained awkward postures may place unnecessary strain on back and neck which may lead to pain or injury. E.g. for every inch (2.5cm) the head moves forward, the pressure on the spine increases as if the head weighed an extra 4.5kg.

Setting up your workstation properly encourages good posture and minimises risk of discomfort and injury.

5.4 kg   14.5 kg   19 kg
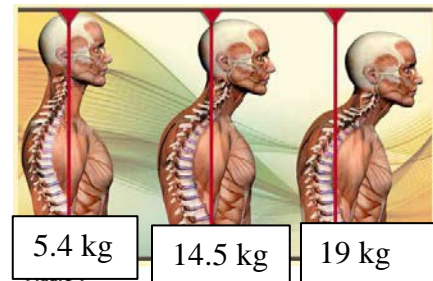
b. Chairs

Chairs are one of the most important pieces of office equipment. To be effective, the chair needs to be adjusted to suit the user. Features of a well-designed chair that can be adjusted to suit a range of people include:

- back rest easily adjustable in height and angle
- back rest provides lumbar support
- height of chair is adjustable
- seat (pan) width is appropriate for the individual user
- seat (pan) depth is appropriate or adjustable
- adjustable or removable armrests
- five star castor base for stability, and
- "breathable" fabric.

Height - The seat height should be adjusted so your feet rest firmly on the floor allowing you to take some weight through your feet when you are seated. As a guide, while standing, adjust the height of the chair so the highest point of the seat is just below your kneecap. If you feel pressure near the back of the seat, raise your chair. If you feel pressure near the front of your seat, lower your chair.

Back Support – The height of the back rest should ensure the lumbar pad supports the natural curve of your lower back. The back rest should be able to tilt slightly to allow a comfortable and supported sitting position to be achieved.

Seat Tilt – Seat tilt can be adjusted to improve your comfort. This will also affect your weight distribution. A small tilt of approximately five degrees is usually recommended (i.e. seat pan sloping downwards slightly rather than upwards).


Depth of Seat – When sitting, your thighs should be fully supported by the seat pan. The pan should allow you to use the back support without the front of pressing against the backs of your knees. If the seat pan is too deep, try a back support to reduce the length of the seat pan. Some chairs may have adjustable seat pan.

Width – The seat pan should be wide enough so it does not apply pressure to your thighs. Conversely the seat should be narrow enough so you can comfortably reach the armrests, if applicable.

Arm Support – Armrests can provide support for the upper part of your forearms; however armrests should not prevent the chair from being drawn close to the desk or restrict natural movements. Generally, the inclusion of armrests comes down to personal preference. If armrests are used they should be adjusted to elbow height. If armrests are not appropriate or comfortable they can often be removed.

c. Work Surface/Desk
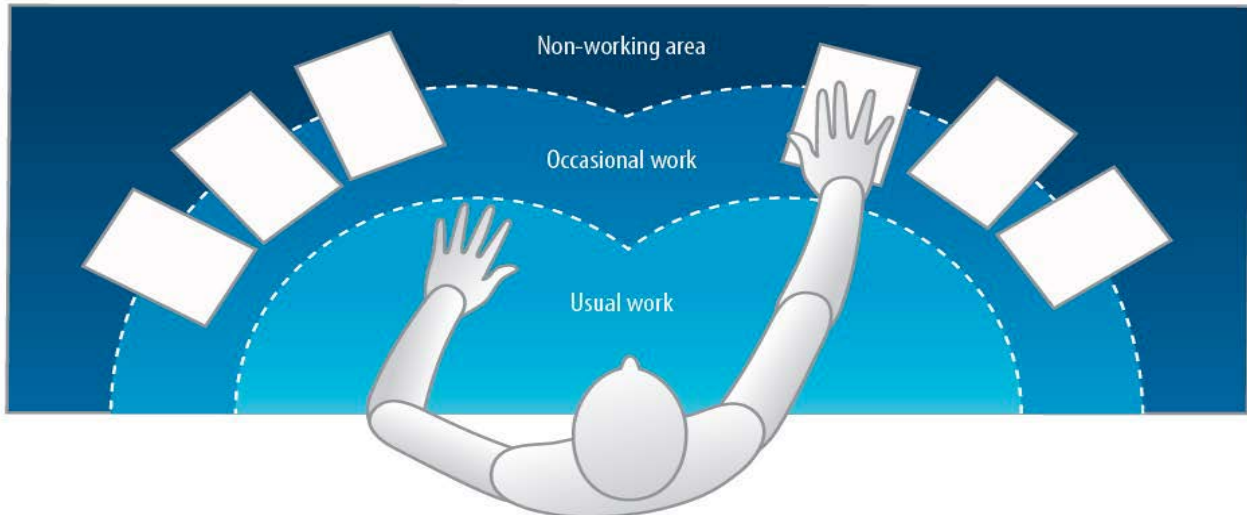
Once you have adjusted your chair you can determine the appropriate height for your desk. When you are seated, the top of your desk should be at elbow height. If your desk height cannot be lowered or raised to accommodate this height, you can raise your chair and use a footrest to ensure your feet are still comfortably flat.

When setting up your workstation, items that are used frequently should be located within the "usual work" area (see illustration above). Items that are used occasionally should be located in the "occasional work" area.

Consider keeping items that are used infrequently in the "non-working area" or away from your desk to encourage you to stand up and move away from your workstation/seated position. This will promote blood circulation and assist you to take natural breaks from your works

d. Keyboard/Mouse

You should be able to maintain the recommended seating position when using the keyboard. The keyboard should be placed 6 – 7 cm from the edge of the desk to allow forearm/wrist to rest when you are not keying. The keyboard should lie flat or negatively inclined (i.e. tilted slightly away from you) not propped up on keyboard legs – see illustration.

When using the keyboard, short breaks of 30 – 60 seconds should be taken as needed to relax your hands in your lap or on your desk. After extended periods of keying, you should change activity to relieve fatigue and rest tired muscles.

The mouse should be positioned at the same level as the keyboard and within easy reach. You may wish to change the hand that you use to operate the mouse throughout the day. The mouse button settings (left / right click) can be changed in the "Control Panel" settings on your computer.
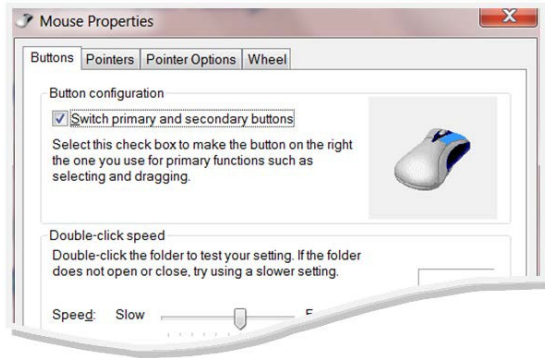
Awkward wrist posture

Correct wrist posture

As learning to use your non-dominate hand for the mouse can take time and may be frustrating at first, a gradual change is recommended. Try to limit the use of the mouse and where possible use the key functions (shortcuts) on the keyboard if you experience pain or discomfort when using the mouse.

e. Computer

The distance that you sit from your monitor will depend on your vision, the font size and the size and resolution of your monitor.
If you sit at your desk in a neutral position and straighten your arm in front of you, your fingertips should be touching the monitor.

Height and Location – The monitor should be positioned directly in front of you with the top of the monitor just below eye level to accommodate normal head position and line of sight.

If you wear bifocals, the monitor may need to be even lower. Some people find that a second pair of glasses is useful for computer work or a computer prescription may be needed in the upper part of the lens. Your optometrist will determine the best solution for you.

f. Accessories

Document Holder and Document Ramps – If a document ramp is used it should be placed directly between your keyboard and your monitor, this will minimise refocusing when your eyes go from the document to the screen. If a vertical document holder is used, it should be positioned next to the monitor for the same reason.

Palm Rest/Wrist Support – Palm rests are designed to raise the palm to keep the wrist in a neutral position. Palm rests should be used while taking short breaks from typing or using the mouse, they are not designed to be used to support the wrists whilst using these devices.

Telephone – Your telephone should be kept within easy reach, within the "usual work" area. If you regularly use the telephone whilst keying or writing, you should use a headset to avoid awkward positioning of your neck.
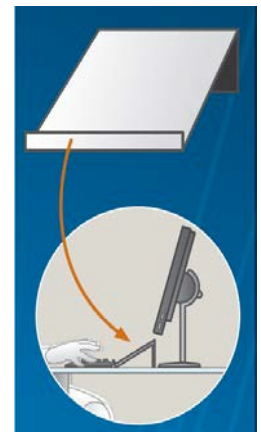
g. Regular Breaks

After following the guidelines listed above you should be seated at your workstation with the optimal posture for most people. However, no posture is ideal indefinitely. The most important thing you can do to reduce the risk of injury and ensure proper blood flow is to take regular breaks from your workstation. Where possible try to structure your work so regular breaks from your workstation are built into your work practices Regular postural breaks also help to reduce any stiffness that may be experienced in the neck and shoulders. These can all be 'productive' breaks where work tasks may continue.