

Office Ergonomics Guidelines

Scope and Purpose

These guidelines relate to all activities under the management and control of Monash University in Australia and apply to affected staff, students, contractors and visitors. The purpose of these guidelines is to supplement the Ergonomic Principles online training available in [myDevelopment](#).

Workstation Set-Up

TIP	JUSTIFICATION
<p><u>CHAIR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the chair backrest to provide different postures, e.g. full upright support to your back when doing computer work, angled back when reading or talking on the phone or to visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent posture change encourages blood flow to different muscle groups, which helps minimise back fatigue when sitting for prolonged periods.
<p><u>WORKING POSTURE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently change posture between sitting and standing. Support the forearms or elbows when using hand held technology such as iPads, smartphones or tablets to relieve the static load in the neck and shoulders Arrange the monitor(s) and data on the monitors to avoid excessive head movements when viewing the screen(s) and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged sitting or standing develops static load discomfort in the body. Increased blood flow through dynamic movement, such as frequent changes in posture, reduces the risk of injury. Static postures develop when looking down, or holding an object for prolonged periods. Resting the tablet or phone on a surface relieves the static load from holding the object. Poorly positioned monitor(s) can increase the frequency of neck movements and may encourage poor and awkward neck and body postures. Position the monitors (and data on larger monitors) to enable an upright and symmetrical posture to be maintained.

<u>TIP</u>	<u>JUSTIFICATION</u>
<p><u>MOUSE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your forearm should rest on the desk when your hand is on the mouse. It should glide over the desk when using the mouse. • Your wrist should not be the contact point between your arm and desk when using the mouse. • Try to train yourself to use the mouse with either hand. • Learn keyboard shortcuts for 10-20 frequent mouse activities to reduce your use of the mouse. • When primarily using the mouse, locate it directly in front of you and use your other hand for minor keyboard corrections. • Do not continue to grip the mouse when it is not in use. Do not 'hover' your hand over the mouse, rest your hand in a comfortable position. • Consider a shortened keyboard without the number pad to reduce stretching out your arm to use the mouse • Adjust the mouse pointer options (Control Panel / Mouse / Pointer options) to minimise the physical mouse movement required to move the cursor around the screen. This is particularly important for larger monitors and where multiple monitors are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetitive movement between the keyboard and mouse to make small activations with the mouse produces accumulated discomfort in the wrist, arm and shoulder. Keyboard shortcuts or changing the mouse between the left and right hand assists in reducing accumulated discomfort. • Poorly adjusted mouse speeds can increase repetitive movements and the use of awkward wrist postures increasing the risks of wrist discomfort and musculoskeletal injury.

<u>TIP</u>	<u>JUSTIFICATION</u>
<p><u>SAFE WORK PRACTICES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that your muscles need regular movement to generate good blood flow. Sitting for long periods is not good for your health. Change your posture frequently and stand up, preferably every 30 minutes. Short breaks more often are better for your body than longer breaks less often. 'Listen to your body'. If your muscles are feeling fatigued, stop the activity and stretch. This generates blood flow and avoids a build-up of fatigue. Remember, your muscles tense when you are feeling stressed and can also feel fatigued. Take control of your activities to avoid the stress factors that produce muscle fatigue. Roles that involve prolonged static positions and or repetitive tasks should be modified where possible. A risk assessment using the Risk Management Guidelines - Ergonomics and Manual Handling should be conducted to identify hazardous tasks and to determine appropriate controls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Static load develops in the shoulders when supporting the forearms and hands in midair against gravity when working on the keyboard and mouse. Frequently lowering the forearms onto the desk surface provides micro breaks, which enables blood flow and reduces static fatigue in the shoulders and arms.
<p><u>VISUAL FATIGUE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly look away from the computer display, preferably to the distance to relieve eye fatigue. Use the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and focus your eyes on something at least 20 feet away. (Source: Canadian Association of Optometrists) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The muscles in the eyes tire when constantly focusing at the same distance when viewing the computer monitor. Frequently looking away changes the focal length and reduce the cumulative eye fatigue.

Exercises for Office Based Workers

STOP, S-T-R-E-T-C-H AND CHECK!

- **Stop if you feel discomfort when performing an action. Discuss with your treating doctor.**
- Do a few of these exercises a few times every day.
- Dots show the muscles that you are exercising.
- Make sure you relax and perform them gently.
- Hold the stretch or repeat as indicated on the diagram.
- Do not over-stretch.
- Remember to do each side.

NECK

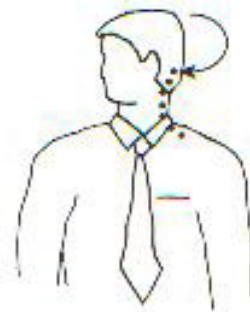
Exercise 1: Head rolls

Gently lower ear to shoulder and hold for 10 seconds. Slowly roll chin to chest and up to other shoulder and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat several times and be careful not to extend your neck back too far.



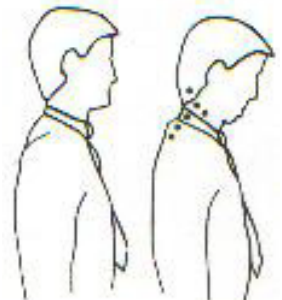
Exercise 2: Head turns

Turn head slowly to look over left shoulder and hold for 10 seconds.. Turn head the other way and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat several times.



Exercise 3: Chin tucks

Raise the head to straighten the neck. Tuck the chin in and upwards creating a double chin. This also results in a forward tilt of the head. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat several times.



Check neck posture

- Position the top of your screen at eye level.
- Use a document holder directly beside or below the screen – it saves you looking down.

SHOULDERS

Exercise 4: Shoulder rolls

Circle shoulders forward several times, then backwards.
Repeat 3 to 5 times.

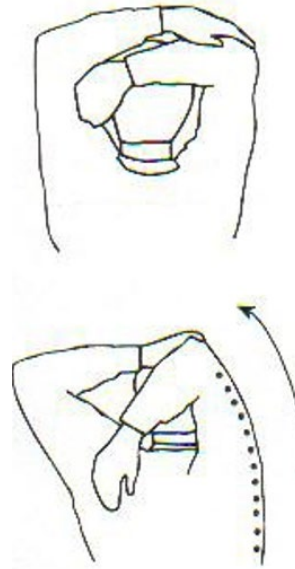


Check shoulder posture

Relax your shoulders and rest your hands on your lap. Bend your elbows to 90 degrees and check the height of your fingertips against your current work height. If the work (keyboard or desk) is higher than your hands you may be hunching your shoulders unnecessarily. If so, try and raise your chair height or lower your desk height and try and relax your shoulders while working.

Exercise 5: Shoulder stretch

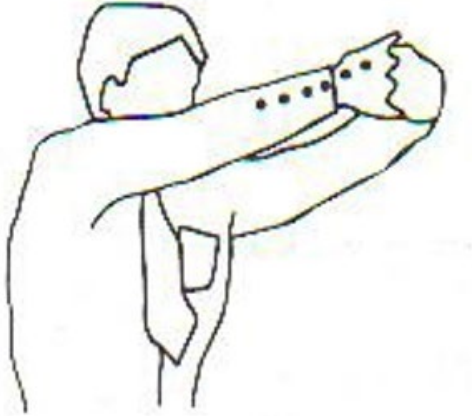
Stretch arm above head, cradle elbow with hand and gently pull elbow behind the head.
Hold for 10 seconds and repeat several times.



WRIST, HANDS AND ARMS

Exercise 6: Wrist stretch

Interlace fingers, palms outward, and straighten arms in front. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat several times.



Check hand and wrist posture

- While keying keep your wrist straight while your fingers are suspended over the keyboard.
- Keep elbows at keyboard level. This may mean adjusting the desk or chair height.
- Don't rest your wrists on the desk or keyboard while keying. Keep hands suspended.

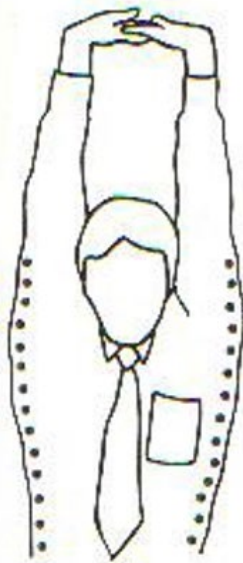
Rest on the desk between periods of keying.

UPPER AND LOWER BACK

Exercise 7: Upper and lower back stretch

Interlace fingers and turn palms upward above head; straighten arms, then slowly lean slightly from side to side.

Repeat movement several times.



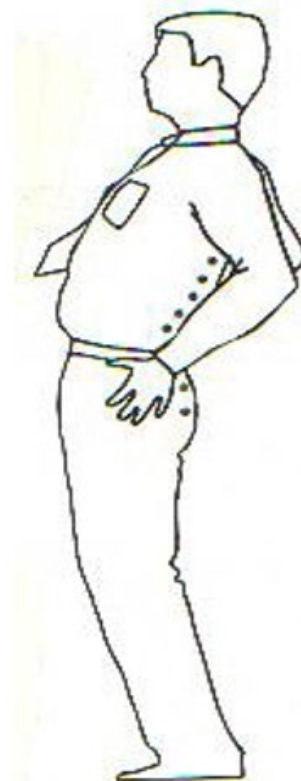
Check back support

- Sit well back in your chair. If your feet need support, use a foot rest.
- Adjust the back rest on your chair to support your lower back.

Exercise 8: Back arching

Stand up. Support lower back with hands and gently arch back. Gently arch back and hold for 5 to 10 seconds.

Repeat as often as is needed.



LEGS

Exercise 9: Foot rotation

Hold onto the chair with hands either side. Straighten leg and lift foot a few centimeters off the floor. Rotate foot and ankle both ways (point toes up) and extend (point toes down). Repeat several times per foot.



Check leg comfort

- If the seat of your chair is digging into the back of your thighs, check that it is not too high or that it is not tilted backwards.
- If the seat is too high, lower the chair and desk or use a foot rest to support your feet.
- Check the tilt of the seat and, if necessary, adjust it to a horizontal position.

EYES

Exercise 10: Visual rest

Look up and away from the screen; focus on a distant object (more than 3 metres away). For example, look out of the window or at a picture on a far wall. Shift vision back to screen and refocus.



Check eye comfort

- Is there enough light falling on your documents?
- Do windows or light fittings cause glare or reflection on the screen? If so, try turning the screen or blocking the path of the light.

Tools

The following tools are associated with these guidelines:

- [Sit/Stand desk information sheet](#)
- [Ergonomics online resources](#)

Records

For OHS Records document retention please refer to:

[Monash University OHS Records Management Procedure](#)

Legislation and Related Documents

Legislation Mandating Compliance

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004), Victoria
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2017)
- DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) Guideline on the Application of Premises Standards 2011

Australian and International Standards

- ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

WorkSafe Guidance documents

- Officewise – A guide to Health and Safety in the Office (January, 2006)

Monash University OHS documents

- [Ergonomic Design Procedure](#)
- [OHS Risk Management Procedure](#)
- [Risk Management Guidelines – Ergonomics and Manual Handling](#)
- [Ergonomic online resources](#)

Acknowledgements

- The original guidelines were prepared for Monash University by David Caple, Director, David Caple & Associates Pty Ltd
- The exercises have been taken from 'Officewise - A Guide to Health and Safety in the Office' (January, 2006) with permission of the Ergonomics Unit, WorkSafe Victoria.

Document History

Version	Date of Issue	Changes made to document
1	September 2004	Computer User Guidelines, v. 1
2	September 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changed title to <i>Office Ergonomics Guidelines</i> 2. Deleted all information on the set-up of chair, desk, computer, which is now outlined in the <i>Workstation set- up checklist</i>. 3. Added information on posture, breaks and reducing static load when mousing.
2.1	July 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated hyperlinks throughout to new OH&S website.
3.	May 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated text and visual rest image 2. Updated Records and Reference sections
4.	September 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated Purpose to reflect that these guidelines now supplement the Ergonomic Principles online training module. 2. Updated Tools section to the new online resources. 3. Added information regarding position of monitor(s) to “Working Posture” section. 4. Added information regarding mouse pointer options to minimise repetitive movements.
4.1	June 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Added information to ‘Visual Fatigue’ section. 2. Minor wording updates throughout. 3. Updated reference to Risk Management guidelines.
4.2	August 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Removed certification logo in header of first page. 2. Removed Table of Contents. 3. Updated reference to OHS Policy to OHS&W Policy. 4. Updated the Standard to ISO 45001 under “Related Documents”
4.3	November 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated to the new ‘Guidelines’ template.