



Workstation setup

We all want to be comfortable while working so it's important to know how to adjust your workstation wherever you work.

People who spend long periods of time sitting or standing at a desk each day are prone to pain and discomfort related to poor workstation setup, equipment, and poor work practices.

Potential health issues related to poor workstation setup:

Physical discomfort, pain or injury:

- Pain;
- Fatigue;
- Muscle discomfort and stiffness;
- Burning sensations;
- Weakness;
- Numbness and tingling.

Visual discomfort:

- Sore, red, dry or watery eyes;
- Eyes feeling 'heavy' or 'gritty';
- Blurring of vision;
- Headaches.

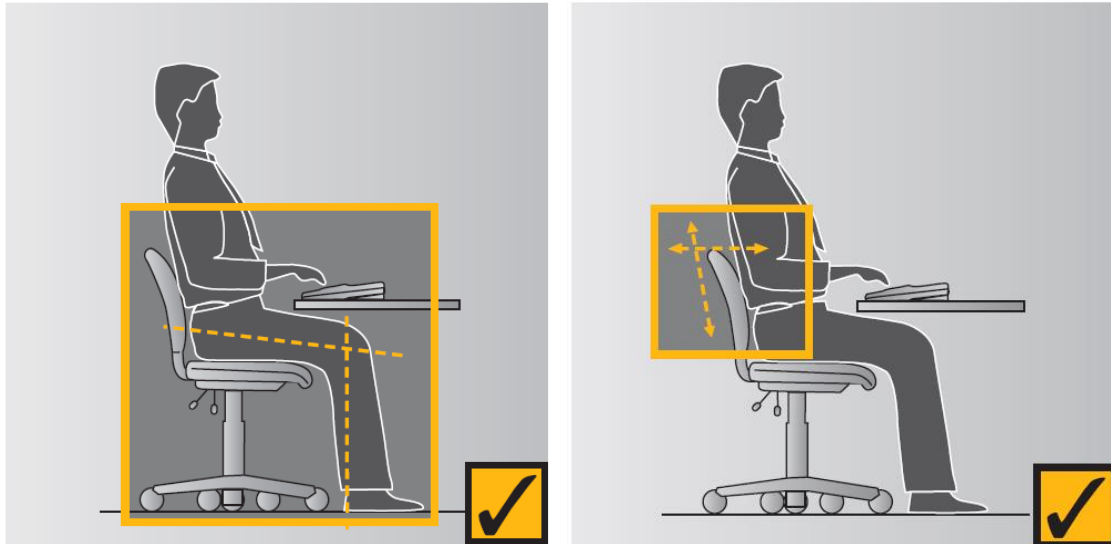
Stress and fatigue:

- Increasing distress and irritability;
- Difficulty relaxing, concentrating or sleeping;
- Difficulty thinking logically and/or making decisions;
- Decreased enjoyment of work;
- Feelings of tiredness, depression or anxiety.

How to set up your workstation:

When setting up your workstation it is important to adjust and try new positions to find the most comfortable setup for you. This may take a couple of times to get right but is worth spending the time to reduce the risk of health issues arising.

Chair:



- Adjust your seat height and angle so your feet are flat on the floor, with your hips between 90 degrees and 120 degrees.
- If your feet cannot comfortably sit flat on the floor, a footrest should be used.
- Adjust the backrest height and back tilt to fit the curve of your back and allow a slightly reclined posture. With the correct backrest position, there should be a clearance of 2 fingers between the front of the chair and the back of the knees.
- Adjust the height and back support until the most comfortable fit is found.

Desk:

- Adjust your desk height so the top surface of the desk is just below elbow height.
- If you cannot adjust your desk height, raise your chair height and use a footrest.
- Ensure there is clearance under your desk for your legs to sit comfortably. Remove any items that interfere with the space required for your legs.

Keyboard and mouse:

- Sit your keyboard close to the front of the desk, allowing enough space, about 12-15cm, for the wrists and or forearms to rest on the desk surface.
- Adjust your keyboard feet to position the keyboard as flat as possible to avoid awkward positions of the wrists.
- Position the mouse as close to the side of keyboard as possible

Screen:



- Your screen/s should be positioned directly in front of you, approximately an arm's length from your seated position.
- The top of the screen should be level with or just below your eyes, when sitting upright.

Posture and Practices:

Even with an 'ideal' workstation setup, there is still potential for pain and discomfort to develop if good posture and working practices aren't maintained. Good working practices include:

- maintaining good posture,
- taking regular short breaks and micropauses,
- stretching throughout the day,
- task variation.

Having a neutral body position throughout the day, where you are comfortable and naturally aligned, reduces stress and strain on the body. It is important to hold an upright posture and avoid slouching and over-reaching, having a correctly set up workstation will assist you in maintaining good posture.

Regular short breaks help to prevent fatigue and are recommended to be for 5 minutes every hour. Micropauses are generally built into the natural rhythm of the work, occurring between tasks, they allow for periods of muscle relaxation and changes to body and eye position.

Stretches are recommended to prevent the build-up of tension that can be caused by holding static postures at your desk. Good stretches for the office include chin tucks, neck rotations, trunk rotation, and forearm stretches. Check out some stretches for the office [here](#)

Having variation in your work tasks, where possible, can have similar benefits to breaks and micropauses, as it creates variation in mental and physical workload demands throughout the day.

Other computer use:

When working from home the same considerations need to be taken when setting up your workstation and how you work. Although there may be limitations due to equipment adjustability, taking breaks and stretching can help reduce the risk of pain and discomfort developing.

Computer-related health issues are not only work related and can be contributed by domestic or recreational use. Using a laptop in an awkward position frequently for long periods of time, using the wrong furniture, or a poor layout outside of work have similar risks. Although for these activities you have more control over your own computer use and breaks.

Health issues may arise as an accumulation of all activities undertaken, both at work and outside of work.

If after setting up your workstation, you are still experiencing pain or discomfort log a report in [Safe@Work](#)

Where to go for further information:

Relevant Portal links:

<https://portal.fireandemergency.nz/documents/adjusting-your-workstation-guide/>

<https://portal.fireandemergency.nz/how-do-i/safety-health-and-wellbeing/report-eyestrain-problem-and-claim-visual-testing-costs/>

Images and workstation set up information from:

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/officewise-guide-health-and-safety-office-handbook>

Guidelines for using computers

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/dmsdocument/977-guidelines-for-using-computers>