

Guideline B2:

Posture when working at a desk

Working at a desk regularly to perform written tasks, use computers etc. can cause back problems and other musculoskeletal disorders. These can be avoided if the environment is suitably designed and the work planned to avoid prolonged periods of static and/or repetitive work. The following list gives general advice:

1. Adjust the environment to suit the individual and the activity being performed:

- Work items that are most frequently used should be placed in front of the person e.g. computer, books, files
- Work should be positioned to avoid the need to look to one side for any length of time or use repetitive movements to one side

2. Adjust equipment

- The chair should be adjusted so that the person is able to maintain a reasonably upright position and have support for the lumbar spine. The height of the chair should be adjusted so that there is no need to stoop or overreach for routine tasks.
- The forearms should be horizontal and comfortably supported on the desk.
- When using the keyboard hands should be comfortably rested in a neutral position.
- A computer screen should be at eye level so that the person is not forced to spend too much time looking down or up which puts pressure on the eyes and muscles around the neck and head.

3. Work routine

- Avoid doing the same activity for long periods of time, vary the type of work.
- Build in short breaks throughout the day. Activities away from the desk are good to relieve fixed postures.
- Build in activities that involve walking to aid circulation and use different muscles.

4. Safety

- Maintain a safe environment around the desk. Ensure there are no slipping or tripping hazards, and cables are securely fastened.
- Avoid storing loads on the floor.
- Ensure all equipment is used appropriately and has been suitably inspected
- Report any pain or lasting discomfort to your manager/supervisor

