

# Physio Tips

## Ergonomic Tips for Laptop, Tablet and Smart Phone Users

### LAPTOPS

#### Laptop Set Up for Frequent Use

1. Use an appropriate chair that does the following:

Supports your lower back;

- Positions you at the right height to use the keyboard with elbows at 90°;
- Is mobile to allow you to get close to the computer;
- Has no armrests to get in the way.

2. Use an external mouse and keyboard. These items can be positioned at a height that allows your elbows to be at 90° (80°-100°) and close to your sides. Either use a keyboard tray or increase the height of your chair in order to accomplish this. In the latter case, if your feet are not flat on the floor, use a foot rest.



3. The laptop can be elevated so that the screen is positioned at eye level. This can be accomplished by using a docking station, books or stacked paper. If bifocals are worn, the laptop screen can be positioned a little lower. The distance from eyes to screen should be approximately arm's length.

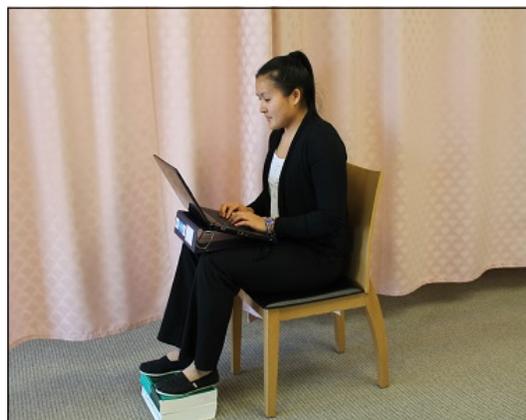
4. In the office, a portable laptop set up can be transferred to a desk top version with a separate full sized monitor and external keyboard and mouse. The monitor should be placed in front and all the items properly adjusted. The laptop can be positioned off to the side by itself or on a docking station and be used as the CPU.

## Laptop Set up for Occasional Use or On the Go

1. A laptop desk can be positioned on the lap for more comfort when in hotels, homes, airports, etc. If the laptop is positioned on your lap, try to avoid head forward or head down positioning and tuck your chin in and use your eyes to view the screen rather than bending your neck.



2. The laptop desk or an empty 2"-4" binder can be used on a table to tilt the laptop towards you. By tilting the laptop this way it also helps to raise the screen closer to eye level.



3. If lying on your bed, support your head and neck and tilt the keypad portion of the laptop on your thighs. This will allow you to hold your arms and wrists comfortably and also raise the screen to a more optimal level.



4. If standing, make sure there is a foot rest or box available to rest one foot on. Alternate foot support. The same computer set up remain in effect. Choose support equipment with tilt, and lift adjustment to ensure the eye/screen level is the same and the elbows are at 90° and close to the sides. Keep the head and shoulders lined up.

## Document Holder

A document holder can be utilized to position and angle source documents in order to help prevent neck bending and twisting.

## Rest and Stretching

Rest sessions are important whenever using any computer. With a regular desktop version a five minute rest every hour is recommended. With a laptop this 5 minute rest should be every 30 minutes. Stretching during rest periods is advised. Move the body in opposite positions to the sitting posture, ie. tucking in your chin; stretching your arms behind your back; and extending your back. Rest your eyes and look away from the screen every 20 to 30 minutes. This will relax the small eye muscles.

## Transporting your Laptop

Consider a back pack with wide padded straps or a wheeled laptop bag.

## TABLETS

- The type of case used to support a tablet affects neck posture. It is important to choose a design that allows you to prop up the tablet at a more upright viewing angle.
- Avoid holding the tablet on your lap. If you cannot support it on a table, use a pillow, book or binder to raise it up.
- If the tablet must be hand held, support the arm with a pillow.
- If you are using a tablet primarily to input data, as opposed to viewing material, consider using a separate keyboard and mouse to create a set up similar to a desk top.
- Keep moving! Tablets are portable devices that make it easy to get up and move around more frequently.



## SMART PHONES

Smart phones are increasingly being used for texting, emailing and browsing the web, with less time spent on “the phone”. The posture that is assumed while performing these activities, ie. using thumbs to type while hunched over a tiny keyboard, is very stressful. If performed repeatedly over extended periods of time, it increases the risk of musculoskeletal injury.

The following tips may help reduce the risk of neck, upper back and upper extremity repetitive strain injuries:

- Draft briefer messages.
- Use word recognition to reduce keystrokes.
- Keep the wrist in a neutral (straight) posture.
- Hold the phone in a position that allows for a more upright neck and upper back posture.
- Keep moving, change your position often and take frequent stretch breaks.



*From Kingston Injury Management Centre  
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