

‘Back’ to Work

The perfect PC posture

Whether at home, work or on the move, more and more of us are spending large parts of the day using a computer. With a growing trend for people to ‘hot-desk’ or work from home and then sit and concentrate at the screen for so long, we may not be aware that the position we’re in is harmful to our spines. The British Chiropractic Association has some advice to keep in mind at the start of each working week:

On the move:

- Make time to check your bag/briefcase each day for items that you won’t need. The paperwork can quickly accumulate and additional weight in your bag is extra weight that your shoulders and back have to bear.
- Use a rucksack design laptop case and carry it on both shoulders and adjust the straps so that the bag is held close to your back.
- If wanting to use a laptop on the train, try to sit where there is a table. If having to use the computer on your lap, limit the time you sit in this way as you are sitting looking down onto the screen, with your head unsupported. Certainly avoid using the seat next to you, as you will also be twisting your spine.

At your desk:

- Always take the time to adjust your chair when you start working at a new location.
- Your seat should be adjusted so that your feet are flat on the ground or on a foot rest, ensuring there is a slope from your hips to your knees. You should end up with your hips higher than your knees and your eyes level with the top of the computer screen. (Stretching your legs out under the desk is also fine if you feel more comfortable this way but if you tend to tuck your feet under the chair, make sure you don’t stay in this position for long as this position reduces blood flow to your legs).

- Relax when sitting into your chair, making sure you have your bottom against the seat back and your shoulder blades are touching the back rest of the chair. The front of the seat should not be compressing against/touching the backs of your calves.
- Arms should be flat and your elbows level with the desk or table you are using. Use a seat with arm rests.
- Take regular breaks. Never sit at the computer for more than 40 minutes; less if possible. When you take a break, walk around and stretch a little; do something completely different.
- Remove any obstacles from under your desk to ensure you have enough leg room.
- Never sit and twist your back to use a laptop.

At home:

- If using a laptop, invest in a stand or docking station to place it on (available from PC suppliers) as this ensures the screen is at eye level. You should also buy a normal keyboard and mouse to plug in, making it much easier to use the laptop in a more 'back friendly manner'.
- Invest in the best possible seat you can afford. If you are going to be sitting in it for long periods of time, it is important to get one that provides the most adjustability and support.

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