

MSK Newsletter

Office workspace edition

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Making People Better

Start the new year with a workspace setup that supports your mind and body

470,000 workers in the UK suffer from MSK symptoms*, such as back pain, neck or arm strains and diseases in the joints. Evidence suggests that unsuitable home office setups have been a large contributor to the issue**.

If slumping in a stiff chair, hunching over a low desk and trying to use a cramped keyboard have become a literal pain in the neck for you, it's time to take action.

Standing and moving regularly throughout the working day is key to helping your mind and body thrive in 2024. Our musculoskeletal experts here at Vita Health Group have shared an easy-to-follow, workspace setup guide, to support you when you are working.



Screen

The nature of the work you carry out will determine whether you use:

- A standard or large screen
- One, two, or three screens
- Screens in portrait or landscape mode.

The screen you use the most should be positioned so that your head is upright, not looking down or looking up, and the content is easy to see without needing to hunch or lean forward.

Position yourself so there's no glare or reflection on your screen. An anti-glare screen protector should resolve any issues you have. Further screens should be positioned at a similar height, close to the dominant screen allowing good visibility with only minor head movement.

If your monitor is below your eye level, you may need to raise the height by using monitor arms or a monitor stand.



Keyboard

Your physical wellbeing and preferences will determine whether you use:

- A compact or full-size keyboard
- A separate or integrated number pad
- A split keyboard
- Coloured/symbols or alternative keys formats.

It's better to use a standalone keyboard that's separate from your screen, rather than using the keyboard on your laptop. That way, you can move the keyboard into the optimum position for you.



Mouse

The type of mouse you use will be determined by the nature of your work and your physical wellbeing. Options include:

- Optical tracking
- Vertical Ergonomic
- Trackball
- Roll bar
- Wired/wireless/Bluetooth
- Right or left-handed.

Instead of using the touchpad on your laptop, which could cause you to lean forward - your mouse should encourage a supported neutral working position. Your arm needs to be at a 90-degree angle onto your desk.



Desk

Question: Is your desk or work surface large enough for you to move your equipment around into an arrangement that best suits you and the tasks you're completing?

There should be enough room to find a comfortable position for all your limbs, with no restrictions and with space to move. Try to aim for a minimum leg room of 85cm.

The height of the desk should allow a suitable working position with your forearms parallel to the floor and sufficient leg room.



Chair

For a chair to meet the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) standards, it should always:

- Be a stable 5-star base
- Allow you to adopt a suitable, supported and comfortable position
- Have an adjustable seat height, with a back rest that's adjustable in height and tilt
- Be able to swivel
- Have casters and wheels that are suitable for the flooring you're on (carpeted or hard surface).



Arm rests

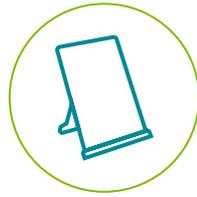
Arm rests are not essential. If present, set the height to allow your forearms to be parallel with the floor or move them out of the way when not in use.



Footrest

A footrest is usually only needed if your feet cannot be firmly supported on the floor while seated.

If you need a footrest, consider one that encourages movement. It should be a suitable height to keep knees slightly below hips.



Document holder

A document holder is needed if your paper documents affect how you position yourself at your computer.

If you're looking between documents and your screen, placing the holder in line with the screen can reduce excessive repetitive neck and shoulder movement.



Laptop or tablet riser

If you work from a laptop or tablet that's flat on a desk, or you work from a laptop or tablet alongside a monitor, it's important to raise the device to eye-level with a stand. You'll also need to consider a separate keyboard and mouse as part of this setup to achieve the optimal position for your body.

The top of the screen needs to be in line with the top of your eyes to prevent any excessive pressure on the neck and shoulders.

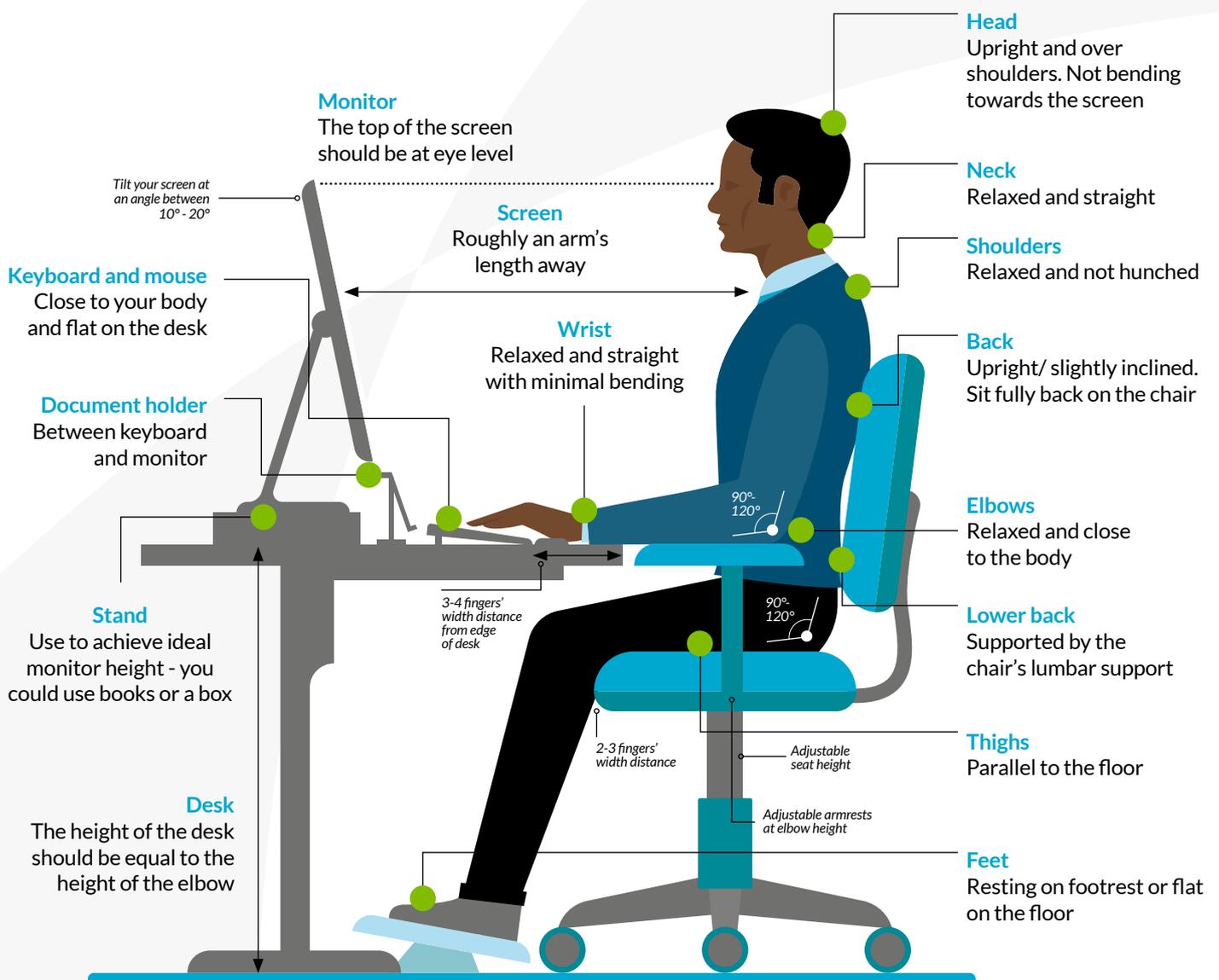
Ideally, you would only use your laptop or tablet as a second screen.

*HSE: Work-related musculoskeletal disorders statistics in Great Britain, 2022

** Work-from-home-related musculoskeletal pain during the COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid review protocol

How to create an ergonomic workspace setup

To check you've got the best setup - print this out, stick it to the wall or save it as an image to your desktop.



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