Practical advice on ergonomics

STUDENT HEALTH CENTRE, LUND UNIVERSITY
General advice for work on a computer

• Vary your sitting position. All positions make you tired after a while.
• Create tasks which will make you have to get up and move sometimes. For example, put the printer in another room and have some folders at a distance so that you have to get up to reach them.
• Set aside 1–2 minutes for relaxation/circulation exercises, preferably once every half hour.
• The top of the screen should be in level with your eyes when you look straight ahead.
• Sit directly in front of the screen and avoid having to turn your head to look at it.
• Rest your forearms against the table or arm rest and keep your elbows at a 90 degree angle. Alternatively, rest your wrists against a soft pad in front of the keyboard and mouse.
• Try to keep your ‘mouse arm’ close to you and avoid sliding your arm too far away or twisting your forearm outwards.

Standing

• Stand with your weight on the pads of your feet and relax your knees.
• Wear soft, sturdy and comfortable shoes.
• Make yourself aware of your posture by looking in a mirror to see how you are standing.
• Shift your weight and place more weight on one foot than the other sometimes, but avoid relaxing one leg and placing all your weight on your hip.
Sitting

• Make sure your legs are supported when you are sitting down and use a footstool if your feet don’t touch the floor.
• Use your hips to move towards the screen rather than leaning forward with your head or relaxing your chest.

Working with a laptop

• Since the screen and keyboard are attached it is difficult to get a good working position with a laptop computer. You may experience pain in your neck and shoulders; this is because the screen is too far down and too close to your eyes.
• If you are going to sit for longer periods of time (more than one hour), it is recommended that you have a separate keyboard which you plug in, giving you the possibility to move the screen further away or higher up.
• Because a laptop is usually small and neat, it is easy to choose the sofa or your favourite armchair as your working place. Remember to vary your sitting position there as well and to sit at a proper table sometimes. When sitting on the sofa, the body easily gets into strained and more asymmetrical positions that cause pressure on the neck, shoulders and back.

In order for the body to get rid of waste products that are created while working, you need to increase circulation from time to time in the parts of the body on which you are putting most pressure. Do countermovements as well, i.e. movements where you move muscles and parts of the body in the opposite direction to the position in which they are most often.
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