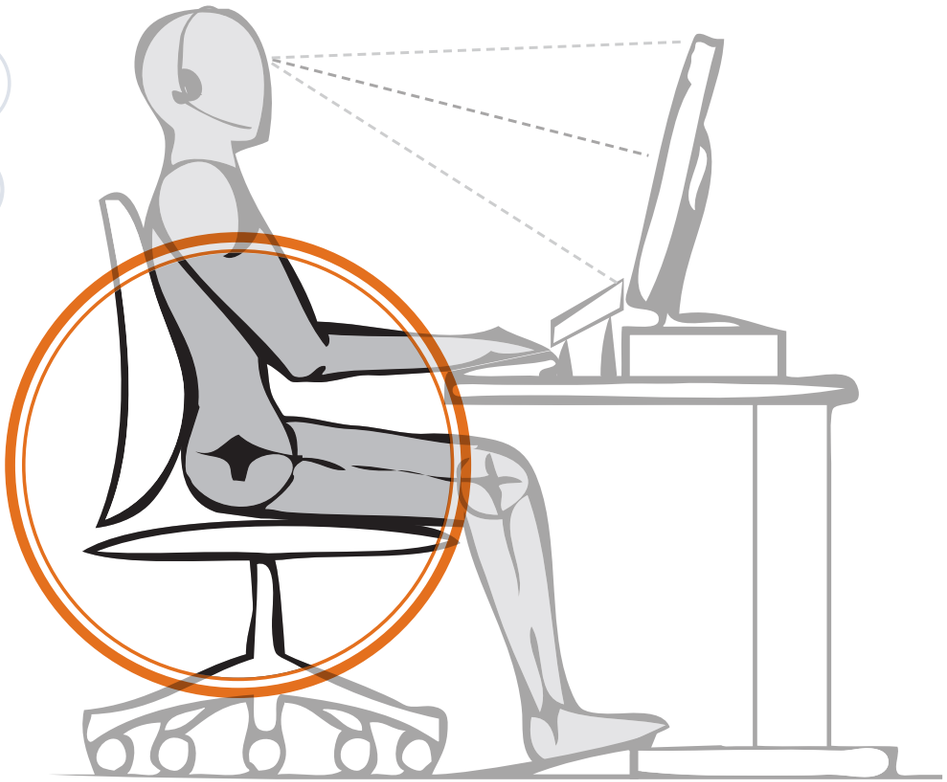
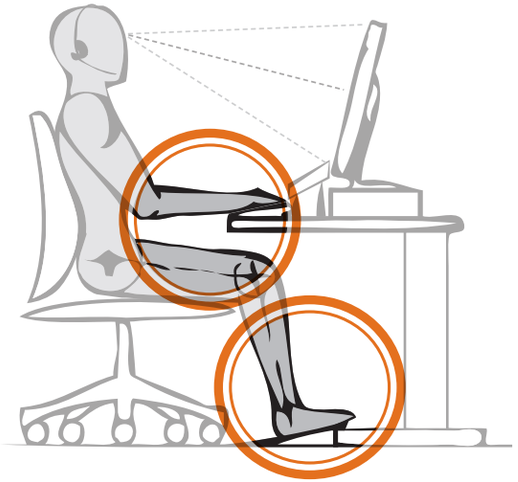
1 Chairs and Desks

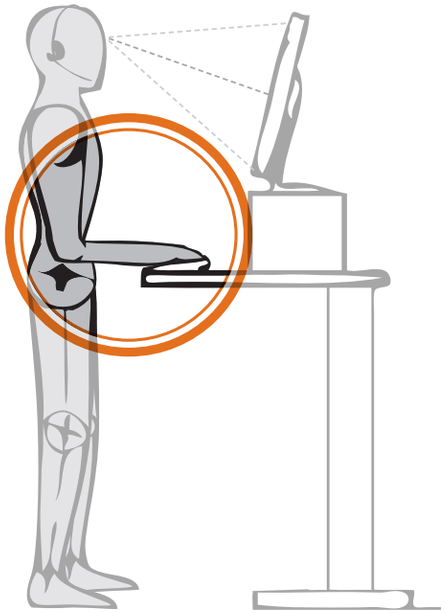


Smart Health recommends...

- Ideally, try to find an office chair that allows you to ***adjust*** seat height, backrest height, backrest tilt and seat tilt. It should allow you to sit comfortably back into the backrest, and the backrest should feel like it ***mirrors the curves*** of your spine.
- If you're using a fixed height chair, like a dining chair, you may need to adjust the seat height using ***cushions***, so that your resting elbow height is the same height as your desk.
- ***Seat Horizontal***, not tipped down to the left or the right.
- ***Seat Horizontal***, not tipped forward or backward.
- ***Seat Not Too Long***. You need to be able to get your butt to touch the backrest without your calves touching the front of the seat.
- ***Backrest Slightly Reclined***. From side on, your head should be slightly behind your hips when you're leaning back into the backrest.
- ***Backrest Shape***. If the backrest feels too flat, like it isn't supporting the arch of your lower back, you might want to add a small cushion, which you can hold in place with a Chair Tube *(https://backcentre.com.au/product/chairtube-chair-backrest-cover)*

2 Chairs and Desks

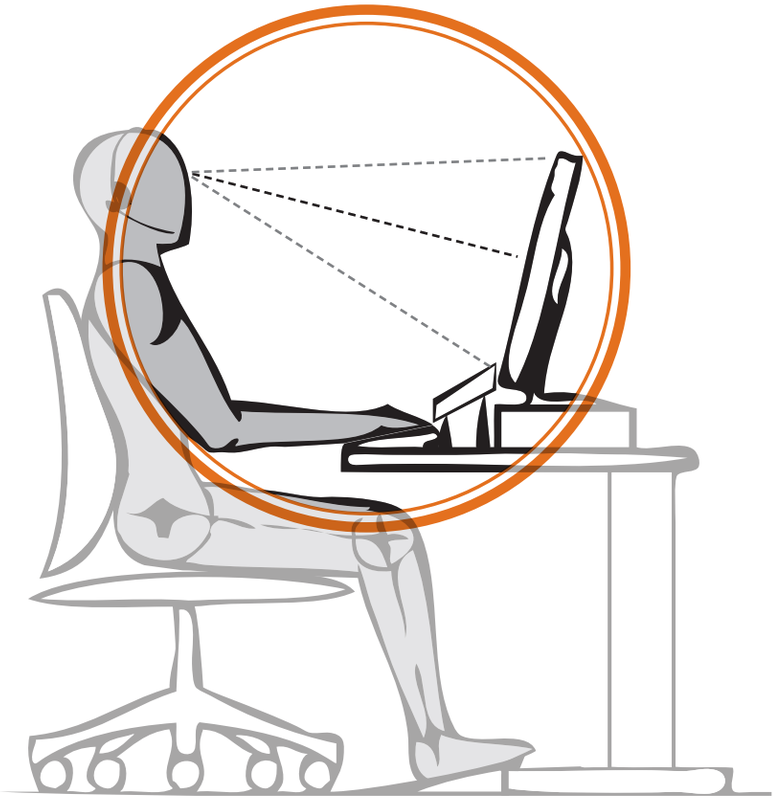




Smart Health recommends...

- ***Resting Elbow Height = Desktop Height***. If your desk height is fixed, you'll need to adjust your seat height so that your elbows are exactly at desk height. If your elbows are 3cm too low, you'll feel tight and sore through your shoulders from lifting your arms up to the desk. If your elbows are 3cm too high, you'll slump all day to come down to your desk height, and your back and neck will become sore and tight.
- ***Seated Desk Height***. As a rough guide, ideal seated desk height for the average female adult (at 162cm tall) is around 700mm, and for the average male adult (at 176cm) is around 730mm.
- ***Dining Furniture***. In most houses, dining tables are slightly higher than ideal desk height, and dining chairs are slightly lower than ideal for computer work at the dining table. If you're setting up your computer at an area normally used for eating, it's likely that you'll need to lift the seat height by 5-10cm (using cushions or similar), and then find a footrest. Again, it's our strong preference that you ***source a proper office chair*** with height adjustment.
- ***Footrest***. Once your seat is at the right height for your desk, if your feet aren't firmly ground, you'll need a solid footrest.
- ***Standing Desks***. If you can find a work surface at the right height, or if you have a standing desk set-up, alternating between sitting and standing is a great idea, and ***will reduce postural strain***. The guidelines for desk height are the same as they are for sitting: workbench height should be exactly the same as resting elbow height.

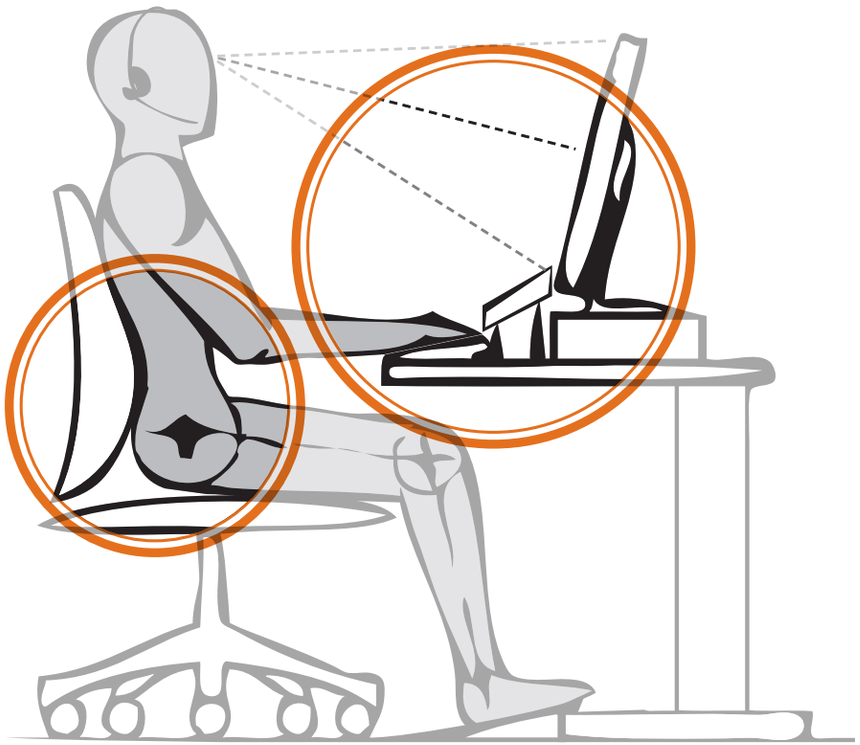
3 Screens



Smart Health recommends...

- ***Laptop Screen***. Do not use your laptop screen unless your laptop is positioned on a laptop stand, and you are using a separate keyboard and mouse.
- ***Screen Height***. When you're sitting upright, the top-third of your screen should be at eye height. This is difficult to measure when you're sitting at your desk; if possible, ask a friend or family member to gauge this from side-on.
- ***Eyeglasses***. If you wear eyeglasses at your computer, and they encourage a downward gaze (either because they sit slightly low on your nose, or because you're viewing your screen through the bottom half of your bifocal lenses), you'll need to set your screen height lower to encourage a neutral head/neck posture.
- ***Screen Tilt***. Your screen should be tilted very slightly upwards, so that it points towards your eyes, not your chest.
- ***Screen Distance***. Your screen should be at a distance that encourages you to sit comfortably upright. If your screen is too far away, you will subconsciously lean forwards and down towards it to optimise your focus, leading to slumped postures and muscle soreness.
- ***Screen Angle – One Screen***. If you're using one screen, place it centrally in front of you, so that you're not twisting your neck to one side or the other.
- ***Screen Angle – Two Screens***. If you're using two screens, make sure they're both at the appropriate height and distance (see above). You can either choose a 'primary' screen (on which you'll do most of your work) and place that primary screen centrally, with your secondary screen immediately to the right. Or if you use both screens equally, you can arrange the two screens symmetrically, but be aware that your neck will be twisted slightly left or slightly right for most of the day.

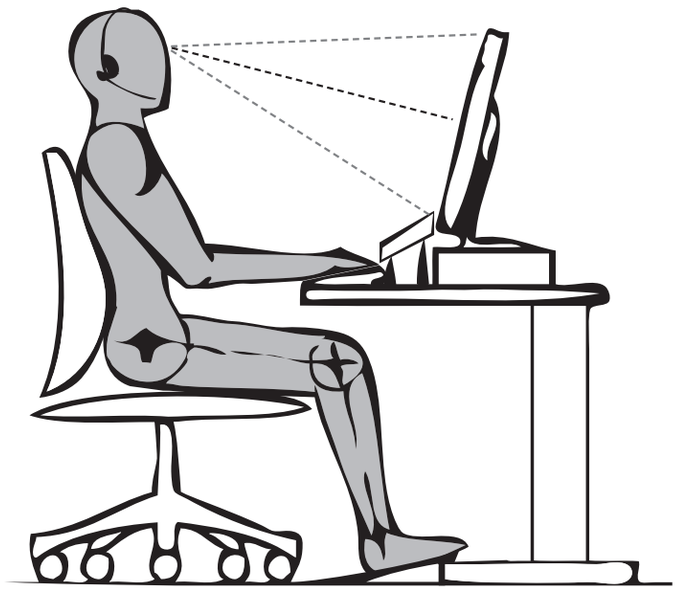
4 Symmetry, Keyboard and Mouse



Smart Health recommends...

- *Symmetry*. If your workstation is arranged symmetrically, it will encourage a symmetrical posture, and you'll be less likely to be tight and sore by the end of the day.
- *Keyboard*. If you're typing frequently, try to line up your home keys ('G' and 'H') with your belly button.
- *Mouse*. Try to keep your mouse immediately adjacent to the side of your keyboard, so that it is more-or-less in line with your elbow. If you're right-handed and quite narrow through your shoulders, you might benefit from using a smaller keyboard, so that your mouse isn't pushed too far to the right.
- *Screen*. Try to have your primary screen positioned centrally in front of you (see "Screens" PDF for more information).
- *Paper Documents*. If you're frequently referring to paper documents, place them centrally between your keyboard and your screen (ideally on a document stand), rather than down to one side of your keyboard.
- *Posture*. Check whether you have any asymmetrical postural habits, like crossing your legs, or leaning onto one elbow. Try to work on minimising those habits throughout each day.

5 General Home Office Advice



Smart Health recommends...

- ***Equipment***. While it's tempting to use your home furniture (dining table, dining chairs, couches) as your home office, they're almost certainly not designed for sustained working postures. If you have the resources available, try to source a desk and chair designed at the right height for computer work (and for your body).
- ***Laptop Use***. Your laptop is not designed for sustained stand-alone use. If you are using your laptop on your couch or at your dining table, the screen will be too low, causing your to slump, resulting in back and neck pain. To use your laptop for long sessions of work, at the very least, you will need a separate keyboard and mouse, and either a separate larger flatscreen (to use as a display instead of your laptop screen), or a laptop stand.
- ***Regular Breaks***. No matter what posture you're adopting at your computer, take a break every 40 minutes, go for a walk, and do some stretches (check out our stretching guides for assistance).
- ***Hands-Free Telephones***. If you're on the phone regularly, get into the habit of using speakerphone or a hands-free kit.
- ***Document Stands***. If you're regularly looking at paper documents, position them on an in-line document stand between your keyboard and your screen.
- ***Couches & Recliners***. Are excellent for resting, watching TV and reading books, but are not recommended for working. Keep your work at your desk, and keep your couch for rest-and-relaxation.

Try to avoid...