

10 STEPS TO SET UP YOUR OWN ERGONOMIC WORKSTATION



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About Northwest Physiotherapy Group

Northwest Physiotherapy Group was first established as Essendon and Moonee Ponds Physiotherapy Clinic in 1990. We have over 50 years combined experience in muscle and joint conditions, and have a fully equipped, purpose-built facility.

We can have you feeling fitter, stronger, more energetic, and pain-free in the shortest possible time.

“Get fast, effective, long term results with new approach to Physiotherapy based on current pain research. We provide expert hands-on assessment and treatment of the whole body and teach you how to manage the cause of your problem”

We guarantee you will be completely satisfied with our professional, caring and comprehensive service. To book an appointment call us on 03 9370 5654 or visit <http://www.nwpg.com.au/>

10 STEPS TO SET UP YOUR OWN ERGONOMIC WORKSTATION



STEP 1: ADJUST YOUR BACKREST

Sit back as far as you can into your chair so that your hips are **against the backrest**. Most backrests have a small curve (lumbar support) and as you sit into your chair you should be able to feel it supporting your lower back. If your chair does not have one, you can use a **small cushion** or **roll up a towel** and place it in the small of your back. Lumbar rolls can also be purchased from your Physiotherapist or Pharmacist.

The angle between your hip and trunk should be **greater than 90 degrees** (between 95°-120°) so that the backrest is **slightly reclined**. This position has been shown to **reduce load through the lumbar discs**, as well as **decrease build-up of tension** in neck, shoulder and spinal muscles – as long as there is good spinal support through the whole chair. Ideally the backrest should **support your entire spine** (not just the lumbar spine) so your upper back and shoulders are able to rest against the upper part of the backrest.

STEP 2: ADJUST YOUR CHAIR HEIGHT

When adjusting the chair height, **your hips should sit slightly higher than the level of your knees** to help you maintain a neutral lumbar posture. This will also decrease pressure on the knees and help prevent tightness developing your hip flexor muscles at the front of the hip. With your hips and knees in this position, your **feet should rest flat on the ground**. If you find that your feet can't touch the ground, use a foot rest or a shoebox. **Never sit in a position with your knees higher than your hips!**

There should be approximately a **2 finger gap between the back of the knees and the front of the chair** – this allows the chair seat to distribute pressure evenly through the thighs and reduce the pressure on the spine.



STEP 3: BRING THE CHAIR CLOSE TO THE DESK

Now that you are resting nicely and well supported by the chair, **pull yourself close to your desk** so that you avoid overreaching. You should be able to reach your phone, keyboard, and mouse without having to lean forward away from the backrest of the chair.

STEP 4: CHECK THE ANGLE OF YOUR ARMS

While sitting at your desk, your **elbows should be slightly above the height of the desk** so your forearms remain horizontal while operating the mouse and keyboard. This keeps the neck and shoulder muscles relaxed and prevents hitching the shoulders to keep the arms clear of the desk.

If you are hitching your shoulders, then you will have to increase the height of your chair more (this might also mean that you will need a higher foot rest!)

STEP 5: KEEP YOUR KEYBOARD AND MOUSE CLOSE

Keep your keyboard at a distance so that your **elbow angle is approximately 90-100 degrees** and you don't have to stretch your arms in front of you to type. Position your mouse so you can use it while keeping your elbow close to your side and avoid over-stretching to the side. If possible, **alternate using the mouse between the right and left hand** as this prevents strain building up on one side.



STEP 6: CHECK YOUR WRIST POSITION

Your wrist should be in a **relaxed and neutral position** when typing. Imagine a line between your wrist (forearm) to your knuckles and the line should be **slightly angled upwards (15 degrees)**. If you have to bend your wrist back any more to type, you will either have to increase the height of your chair again (and foot rest) or lower your keyboard height.

STEP 7: ADJUST THE COMPUTER SCREEN

Now that you are sitting comfortably with your legs, arms, and shoulders resting in the correct position, you need adjust the computer screen to the appropriate height. **The computer screen should sit directly in front of you and your eye level should sit within the top third of the screen** so you don't have to move your head either up or down to look at the screen.

Adjust the distance of the screen towards you so that you can read the screen without having to squint or lean forward. Alternatively, you can always **increase the font size on your computer**. You may also benefit from having your eyesight tested.

If you use two screens, you should position yourself in front of your main screen and have the second screen positioned as close as possible to this screen. If you use both screens an equal amount, you should position yourself in the middle of the two screens and **use your swivel chair to move** when switching between screens instead of twisting yourself repetitively.



STEP 8: MOVE YOUR PHONE

If you need to use the phone for work, **place it within easy reaching distance** so you don't need to overextend with your shoulders or leaning over with your body. It can be a good idea to **position the phone on the opposite side to the dominant mouse hand** to help share the load between the left and right upper limbs. If you use a phone a significantly for your work, **consider a headset** to avoid holding the handset to your ear for long periods of time.

STEP 9: SET UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT

As with the phone, **place all commonly used documents/stationeries within easy reach** to save yourself from repetitive over reaching or leaning. If you refer to paper documents repeatedly, **use a document holder**. This should sit between the keyboard and the screen to reduce the level and frequency of neck bending and rotation required.

STEP 10: TAKE REGULAR BREAKS

Now that your work station is set up ergonomically, you can work more efficiently with less strain on the body. However, remember to **get up out of the chair every half hour for a short rest break** and to stretch your arms and legs. **Our body is not designed to be seated statically for a prolonged period!** Prolonged sitting and keeping the hips in a flexed position for hours will cause undue loading to soft tissues and joints around the spine, shoulders, and hips, so get out of that chair!

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU WORK FROM A LAPTOP MOST OF THE TIME?

Get a separate keyboard and mouse! This will save you from straining your spine and muscles over time. You can prevent that by **elevating your laptop to the appropriate height** (prop it up with a few books or a stand) and **using a separate keyboard and mouse**. Follow the steps above to finish your set up.

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

If you are experiencing any neck, shoulder, or back pain that does **not** resolve with correcting your workstation set up, **you may have developed an injury that requires more specific correction**. Our experienced physiotherapists can help you resolve these problems quickly if treated sooner rather than later.

Call our rooms in Essendon on **9370 5654** or book online through our website for your initial consultation. Your satisfaction with our professional, caring, and thorough service is guaranteed. You can look forward to many years of increased energy and enjoyment doing the things you love to do!