



## Office Ergonomics

Pains caused by working conditions are commonplace. We all spend time making sure our shoes fit but few people adjust their chairs in the working environment.

People sit in chairs that do not support them properly and then wonder why at the end of a long day they are suffering with back pain. At the Wye Physiotherapy Practice we specialise in ergonomics and are often asked to go in to offices and look at the causes of someone's suffering. It is important to identify the problem before it becomes chronic and time off work is needed to let the pain settle. The problems we encounter are varied and can affect the whole body.

**Neck Pain** is often caused by peering at a computer screen which is at the wrong height or the wrong angle. Make sure you are looking straight at the screen without bending your head and neck down; your eyes should look slightly downwards.

Vari or bifocal glasses often cause people to lift the chin in order to focus on the screen. Make sure your optician knows how much time you are spending on computer work.

**Back Pain** is usually the result of sitting without correct support for the lower back. The chair must be pulled into the lower back so that the thighs are fully supported, the feet flat on the ground, and the lower part of the spine fitting snugly into the back of the chair. A headrest is a good idea if a lot of time is spent on the telephone. Perching on the edge of the chair offers no support to the back.

**Arm Pain** is often felt by keyboard users who do not have armrests on their chair. The shoulder girdle muscles then have to carry the weight of the arms continually while you are working. Tension develops in the muscles and pain is felt in the upper arms and shoulders. Try to rest your elbows on the armrests and the forearms on the desk when using a keyboard.

**Wrist Pain** can develop into repetitive strain injury caused by using a mouse of incorrect size or shape. The muscles of the hand work too hard gripping the mouse or holding it at the wrong angle. We can advise on alternative shapes and designs so that the mouse used is appropriate for the user.

When working in an office or in other situations it is important to take regular breaks and stretch out your back and limbs so stiffness does not develop. Taking regular exercise when not at work is always beneficial. The Wye Physiotherapy Practice is always on hand to give practical advice and treatment for any of these work related problems.