

## UNIVERSITY STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES • Fact Sheet

**HEALTH TIPS FOR COMPUTER USERS****THINGS TO KNOW**

Over time, working at a computer can lead to a variety of health issues, including back pain, eye strain, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and others. Your chance of developing a computer-related injury is related to three factors:

- Workstation design, including the work area, keyboard, monitor, mouse, chair and lighting.
- Your specific physical characteristics, such as pre-existing issues with your back, neck, upper extremity and/or posture.
- Amount of time spent at the computer, including the number of hours worked per session, as well as hours per day and per week.

If you experience continuous pain, loss of sensation, weakness or inability to do the work you need to do, please make an appointment to see your healthcare provider.

**USE AN ERGONOMIC\* WORKSTATION**

\* Ergonomic refers to the science of designing equipment to maximize productivity and minimize stress or injury.

- Your monitor should be 10-20 degrees below eye level and straight ahead, with the screen approximately 15-32 inches away. The display should be sharp, steady and free from reflection and glare.
- Use a document holder that keeps documents close and level to the screen.
- Your keyboard height should allow your elbows to bend at 90 degrees. A chair with cushioned arm supports is helpful.
- Your wrists should be extended minimally (up to 10-20 degrees) and never flexed down. A foam pad in front of the keyboard will prevent your wrists from pressing into the desk edge. If your wrists become tired or achy, use an ergonomic keyboard. Unlike standard keyboards, ergonomic boards are angled so that your wrists don't have to be.
- Use an ergonomic mouse or a trackball that is maneuvered with your finger as opposed to your wrist.
- Your chair should allow your lower back to be supported in its natural curve; a rolled towel or lumbar cushion can be used if needed. Choose a chair that is fully height-adjustable with adjustable arm rests. A chair that swivels easily is also preferred.
- Make sure to have adequate knee clearance under your table or desk.
- When you're sitting, your feet should be flat on the floor. Put a book or footrest under your feet if needed.

## **TIPS TO PREVENT OR ALLEVIATE COMPUTER USER WOES**

- **Get up and walk** for a few minutes at least once an hour. If walking is not an option, stand up and sit down at your desk a few times without using your hands.
- **Add variety**. Instead of working at the computer for hours, alternate typing with reading, writing by hand, filing, etc.
- **Stretch and relax** at regular intervals. Some excellent exercises include the following:
  - Turn your head slowly to the left, and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat on the right side. Drop your chin to your chest, hold, then slowly tilt your head back as far as possible. Repeat this entire sequence 5-10 times.
  - Let your arms relax at your sides. Raise your shoulders and rotate them up and back in a circular motion. Repeat up to 5 times. Then change directions.
  - With your hands held out in front of you, clench both fists, and hold for 5 seconds. Then spread your fingers as far as you can and, hold for 5 seconds. Repeat this sequence 5 times.
  - With one hand, slowly press the fingers of the other hand back toward the wrist. Hold this extension for 5 seconds. Reverse hands and repeat.
  - Stretch your back with a big hug. Put your right hand on your left shoulder and your left hand on your right shoulder. Round your back a little, and feel the stretch between your shoulder blades.
  - Massage your shoulders. Press on tight spots for several seconds.
  - Sit up tall in your chair, or stand up. Raise your arms overhead, interlock your fingers, and stretch up as tall as you can. Look up at the ceiling, lifting your chin high and lengthening your neck. Breathe and release.
- **Learn 15 stress-relieving yoga moves at your desk** at [www.yogajournal.com/officeyoga/](http://www.yogajournal.com/officeyoga/). A video will guide you through 15 days of simple yoga poses that can undo tension in the neck, shoulders, wrists, low back, and hips.

### **FOR MORE INFO:**

- [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/)