

Laptop Tip Sheet

Laptops were developed to fulfill a need, to make the office portable. While business travelers continue to use laptops, more and more individuals are using laptops as their primary machine. The Center for Disease Control states that *regular use* of notebook computers violates ergonomic guidelines.

Laptops place undue stress on a user's neck, back and eyes. Prolonged use of laptops results in shoulder fatigue. The non-ergonomic nature of laptop keyboards and track balls increases the risk of repetitive stress injuries.

It is **strongly recommended** that full time laptop users have their machine ergonomically retrofitted to limit injury.

Tips for using laptops:

- Use a docking station. A docking station consists of a full monitor, keyboard and mouse and uses the laptop as the hard drive. This allows the user to follow ergonomic best practices.
- Take mini breaks every 20 to 30 minutes.
- Try alternating: work with the computer on your lap for a short time and then on a tabletop.

Keyboard and mouse

- Use an external mouse and keyboard. The track ball on a laptop is difficult to maneuver and the keys on the keyboard tend to be smaller. The resulting improper positions increase the risk of repetitive stress injuries.
- Keep your wrists as straight as possible while keying. Position the keypad at elbow height.

Monitor

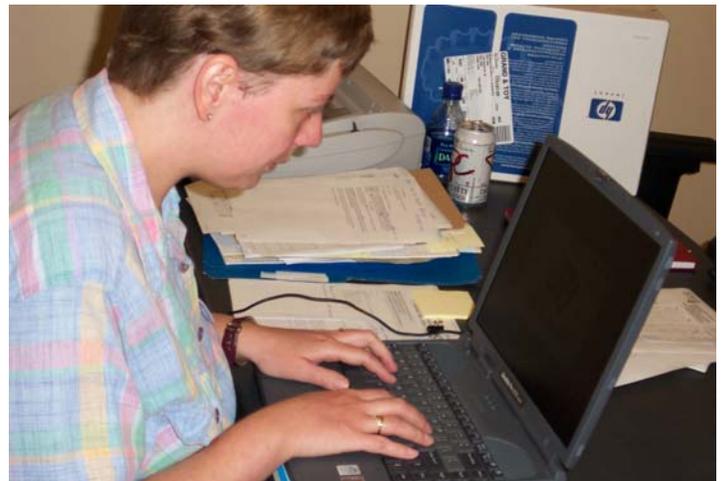
- Keep your head and neck straight, in line with your back. Avoid excessive neck flexion or rotation.
- Place the monitor at a comfortable viewing distance of at least 18 to 30 inches. Angle the screen perpendicular to your line of sight.

Travel tips

- If the main purpose of using your laptop while traveling is to retrieve email, use a wireless PDA (Blackberry or Palm Pilot). These units provide the same access but are smaller and lighter.
- Eliminate unnecessary parts and pieces when traveling. Ensure your carry bag has padded shoulder straps or use a wheeled luggage cart for transporting your laptop from one location to another.



ACCEPTABLE: keyboard and monitor separated.
Good head, neck and wrist postures.
External mouse and keyboard.



POOR: Excessive neck flexion.
Wrists not straight while keying.
Monitor not at comfortable height.



ABYSMAL: Improper workstation.