

Ergonomics in the workplace



The use of cellphones

The use of cellphones has dramatically increased in recent years. We see that even young children have access to these devices. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of thumb and wrist injuries as well as neck pain and eye strain. These conditions are often referred to as texting thumb, i-hurt, smartphone elbow and tech-neck.



Texting thumb is caused by the repetitive movements of the thumb when using smartphones. People often experience the following common symptoms when lifting or pinching objects: swelling and inflammation of the tendons, pain and swelling at the base of the thumb, and stiffness or weakness at the wrist.

You can avoid this by using the fingers more often to type instead of the thumbs. One can also use the pad of the thumb to text instead of using the tip of the thumbs.

Tech-neck is the pain you feel in the neck and shoulder when you spend long periods of time with the head tilted down to look at screens. This forward head tilt adds immense weight to the neck, shoulders and upper back, causing headaches, shoulder pain and a hunched back. You can avoid it by holding the phone at the level of the chest or the chin, or by looking down with the eyes instead of the neck.

Laptops, monitors and keyboards

Laptops have taken over the workspace. Due to hybrid work and convenience, more people now use laptops instead of desktop computers because of their sleek and compact design. Using a laptop for a long period of time can cause strain and pain in different parts of the body.

How to avoid discomfort and pain

The monitor should be placed directly in front of you at eye level. This positioning limits twisting movements of the neck and prevents bending or stretching to view the screen. A laptop stand or even a wedged box can help you achieve this. To limit eye strain, place the monitor approximately 750mm from your eyes. This is the ideal distance for the eyes to focus on what they see. By doing so, you will not have to bend forward in order to see what is before you.

The keyboard and mouse are crucial components of a workstation, just like the monitor. For laptop users, using a detachable keyboard is highly recommended. It's challenging to set up the monitor and keyboard correctly when they are attached. Align the keyboard with the centre of your body for optimal use. Adjust the chair height so that your elbows form a 90-110-degree angle when resting on the table.

This prevents shoulder shrugging and keeps the wrists in a neutral position while typing. Place the mouse at the same level as the keyboard to minimise stretching and reaching.



Making small adjustments to your daily workstation can have a big impact on your body. Importantly, ignoring symptoms of discomfort or pain is not advisable.

