

Office ergonomics - principals and managers

Postural discomfort and musculoskeletal injury are identified as workplace health and safety risks for staff who work at a computer workstation or who perform highly sedentary roles. As a Principal/manager, you can significantly reduce these risks by being aware of work demands for your team and making some simple changes to workplace practices that will impact their 'time at desk'.

Some ways to increase movement in office environments include:

- Provide information on ways to move throughout the day (see 'Individual changes to increase movement' section below)
- Provide information on the health risks associated with prolonged sitting or prolonged standing (refer to the Heart Foundation, The Department of Health and Betterhealth for example)
- Encourage regular breaks for postural changes during sedentary tasks
- Trial standing meetings or "walk-and-talk" meetings
- Promote workplace activity and fitness initiatives, e.g. '10,000 step challenge', 'Active 10', initiate a staff wellbeing program
- Trial communal standing tables for meetings or reading tasks
- Trial a sit/stand workstation as a "hot desk" (see 'Further information and advice' section on page 3 for more details around hot desking)
 - If considering the introduction of sit/stand workstations, refer to the 'Sit/Stand Workstations' section on pages 2-3 to ensure this is undertaken in a considered way.

Individual changes to increase movement

- Use prompts/reminders to get up and move e.g. desktop timers/reminders
- Take the stairs instead of the lift - even for part of the journey
- When appropriate, walk to a colleague rather than always emailing or phoning
- Use a Bluetooth or wireless headset to allow you to stand and move during phone or Teams calls.
- Walk to the printer/fax/copier/rubbish bin
- Vary work tasks to change posture frequently throughout the day
- Eat your lunch away from your desk, go for a walk outside if possible
- Take part in lunch time stretches/exercise sessions
- Aim to incorporate at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week – co-workers may form a group that walk after work or at lunch time.

Computer workstation setup

The regular review of computer workstation set up and task management aims to identify and rectify issues before they are problematic e.g. address minor postural discomfort *before* it becomes a musculoskeletal injury. A well-designed workstation that has been adjusted correctly can also reduce the risk of exposure to musculoskeletal injuries and improve overall comfort and productivity of your team.

With the right information, staff are usually able to undertake their own workstation assessment in pairs or in small groups without the need for further intervention. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- Provide staff with the 'Office Ergonomics - staff' guide and/or talk through the document with them
- Show the [Office Ergonomics Information Session](#) (PowerPoint Presentation)
- Use the [Computer Workstation Setup Self-Assessment](#)

- Staff should be encouraged to undertake the self-assessment when they commence at a new workplace, move to a new workstation or 'hot desk' and a discussion between the staff member and you should be undertaken after the completion of the assessment so that outcomes, including any identified issues can be addressed.
- Show the [Setting up your workstation](#) webinar (DoE staff only)
- Provide staff with the '[Check your workstation set-up](#)' poster (page 5)
- Provide staff with the [Safe Use of Laptops Fact Sheet](#) (where required)

Staff with physical discomfort or injury

The Workstation Ergonomics Flowchart (page 4) describes the process for you to follow for staff with postural discomfort or injury impacted by using their computer workstation.

If a staff member who has completed the self-assessment continues to experience postural discomfort, an ergonomic workstation assessment should be arranged under the [QGP0048-18 Workplace Health Services Standing Offer Arrangement \(SOA\)](#), and funded from the local budget, to prevent the discomfort becoming a musculoskeletal injury.

Where a staff member has an injury, illness or medical condition that is being impacted by their current computer workstation, they should be advised to consult their treating doctor and provide written medical advice to their supervisor. The doctor may recommend modifications to work tasks, hours/days of work and/or the workstation. Where modifications to work tasks, hours/days are recommended, liaise with the local Rehabilitation and Return to Work Coordinator (RRTWC) for assistance to develop a return to work plan. An ergonomic workstation assessment should be arranged under the [QGP0048-18 Workplace Health Services Standing Offer Arrangement \(SOA\)](#) to ensure correct workstation setup for the staff member and prevent further injury or aggravation of injury. This assessment should be arranged regardless of whether a workers' compensation claim is lodged by the staff member.

If a staff member has a work related injury, ensure that the incident detail is recorded into MyHR WHS and managed in accordance with departmental procedure: [Health, safety and wellbeing incident management](#).

Reasonable adjustment

In accordance with departmental procedure for [reasonable adjustments](#), most adjustments can be made at little or no cost. Reasonable adjustments are usually funded from local budgets. If the cost cannot be met at the local level, you should determine if funding can be accessed from an alternative source within or outside the department. The local RRTWC in consultation with the SIMC may be able to provide additional information and assistance.

Record keeping

Maintenance of records, including induction, training, copies of completed assessments and documented outcomes are important to demonstrate management of workplace health and safety risks. Documents containing information about staff injuries and/or medical conditions must be kept confidentially.

Sit/Stand Workstations

Sit/stand workstations enable alternation between sitting and standing whilst performing desk/computer work. They generally fall into two categories:

Table top style – a separate unit is positioned on top of the non-adjustable desktop



Full desk style – the whole workstation can be raised or lowered to suit both sitting and standing positions



Sit/stand workstations are a way of incorporating postural changes while undertaking sedentary work tasks and enable those with medical conditions to stand for periods of time while working.



Be mindful that sit/stand workstations are not a complete solution to sedentary work and may introduce new hazards into the workplace unless they are appropriately managed and adjusted. **Simply providing sit/stand workstations will not replace the need for general physical activity within the workplace.**

If sit/stand workstations are a consideration, trialling one as a 'hot desk' is a good way to check their suitability for staff as in some instances they can aggravate existing injuries/medical conditions or present a risk for new injury if used inappropriately. Conditions such as arthritis and varicose veins can be aggravated by increased standing as can some lower back, knee and ankle injuries so it's important to ensure that anyone considering using one seeks medical advice from their health provider regarding (and precautions for) standing if they:

- have a pre-existing musculoskeletal problem
- have a pre-existing circulatory condition; or are
- pregnant

It is especially important that staff listen to their body and gradually build up time in standing as their endurance allows.

Regardless of the workstation used, changing posture regularly is important. Staff should aim to change posture every 30 minutes throughout the day.

Medical conditions and sit/stand workstations

In some instances, a sit/stand workstation may be recommended by a medical practitioner as a means to alleviate symptoms of a medical condition. Under these circumstances, you should seek assistance from the local RRTWC to ensure that appropriate equipment is acquired and that reasonable adjustment and/or a rehabilitation and return-to-work program is considered and implemented to support the individual's needs. Be sure that the staff member reads and signs the [Sit/stand workstation agreement and safe use checklist](#) and adheres to the prescribed times for standing/sitting from their medical practitioner.

Managing privacy/security of documents on monitors and noise when people are speaking on the phone in a standing position is also important, as is taking extra care when unpacking, setting up and re-adjusting table top style units. Always read the manufacturers' instructions and seek assistance from at least one other person prior to moving and handling table top styles.

Further information and advice

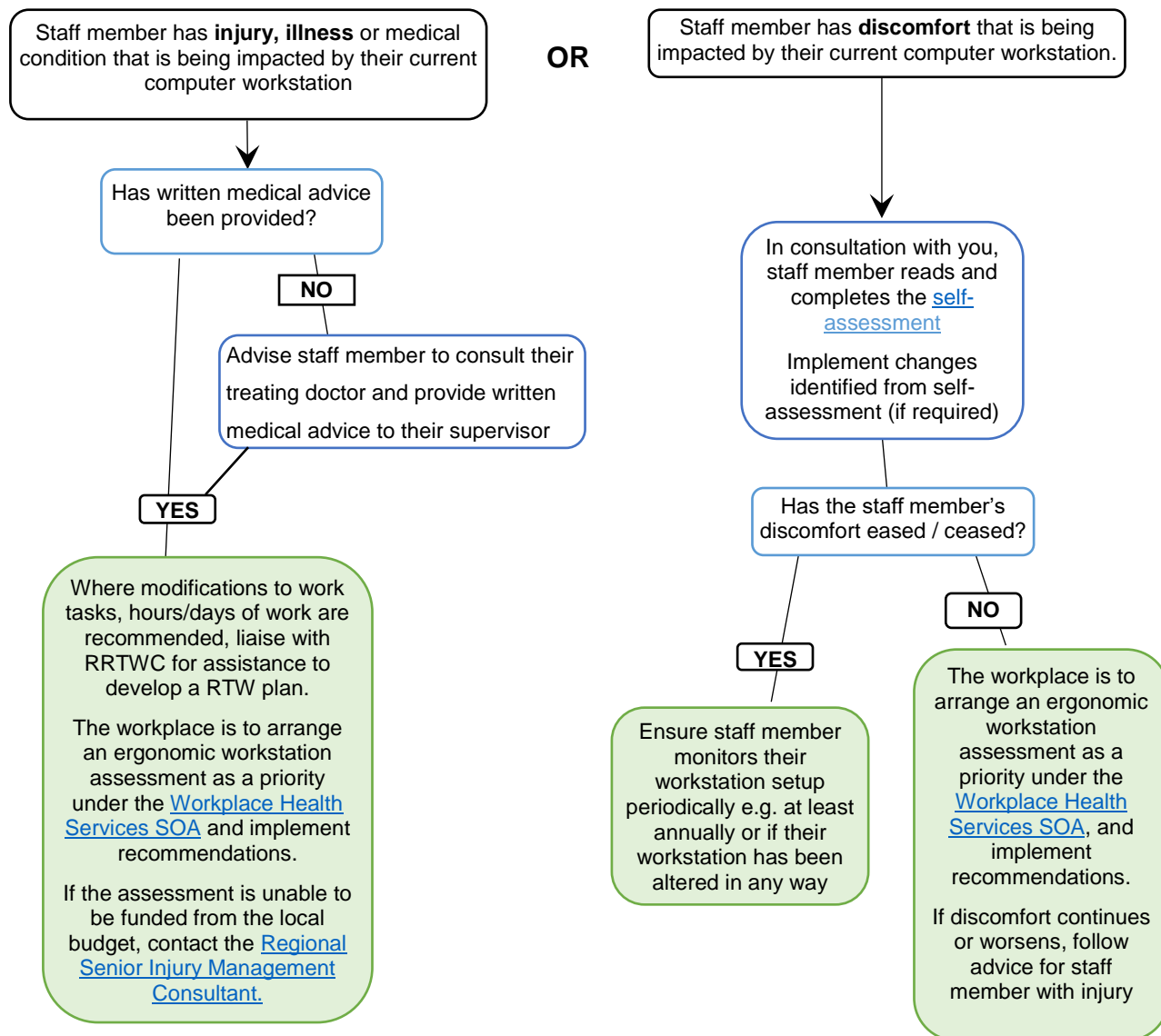
Other general office ergonomic principles to consider include:

- Layout of the workplace - should be sufficient to allow people to enter and exit the workplace and to move about within the workplace without risk to health and safety, both under normal working conditions and in an emergency.
- Office "annoyance" noise (that is distracting and/or interferes with concentration) - rearrange the office layout so the noise generating activities or equipment such as photocopiers/shredders is separated from quiet tasks and select equipment with low noise output. Noise 'barriers' can help contain noise to a particular area e.g. fabric covered room dividers placed around a group of work stations.
- "Hot desking" - a spare desk that any person in a team can access to allow them to undertake computer based task for some portion of the work day e.g. reading a document or checking emails. Staff members should be encouraged to always adjust the "hot desk" to suit and be provided with suitable cleaning material (e.g. wipes) to enable standard precautions for infection control.

To assist you in managing physical, mental and social wellbeing, please refer to the department's Wellbeing webpage: <https://education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/health-and-wellbeing/workplaces/health-wellbeing>

The Injury Management Contact relevant to your location can be found at the link below: <https://education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/health-and-wellbeing/workplaces/contacts>

Workstation Ergonomics Flowchart



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPALS AND MANAGERS:

- Completed self-assessments may contain sensitive information and should be kept securely at the local level
- Be sure to sign completed self-assessments and action items where appropriate/reasonably practicable
- Where alternative office furniture/equipment (such as footrests or ergonomic chair is required, it may be possible to source internally from existing unused items (e.g. contact Facilities Manager/Office Accommodation for available sit to stand desks), however it is essential that equipment meets requirements.
- For help purchasing *new* office furniture/equipment, visit the [Purchasing and Procurement Services '\(Furniture\) Queensland Government Furniture' web page](#) and be sure to trial items where possible
- Ensure an incident record is entered in MyHR WH&S if the injury is work related

*RRTWC – Rehabilitation and Return to Work Coordinator



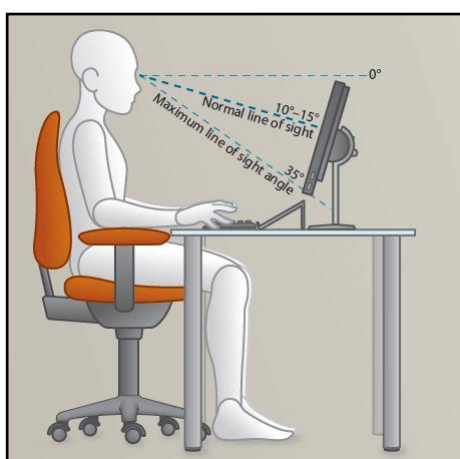
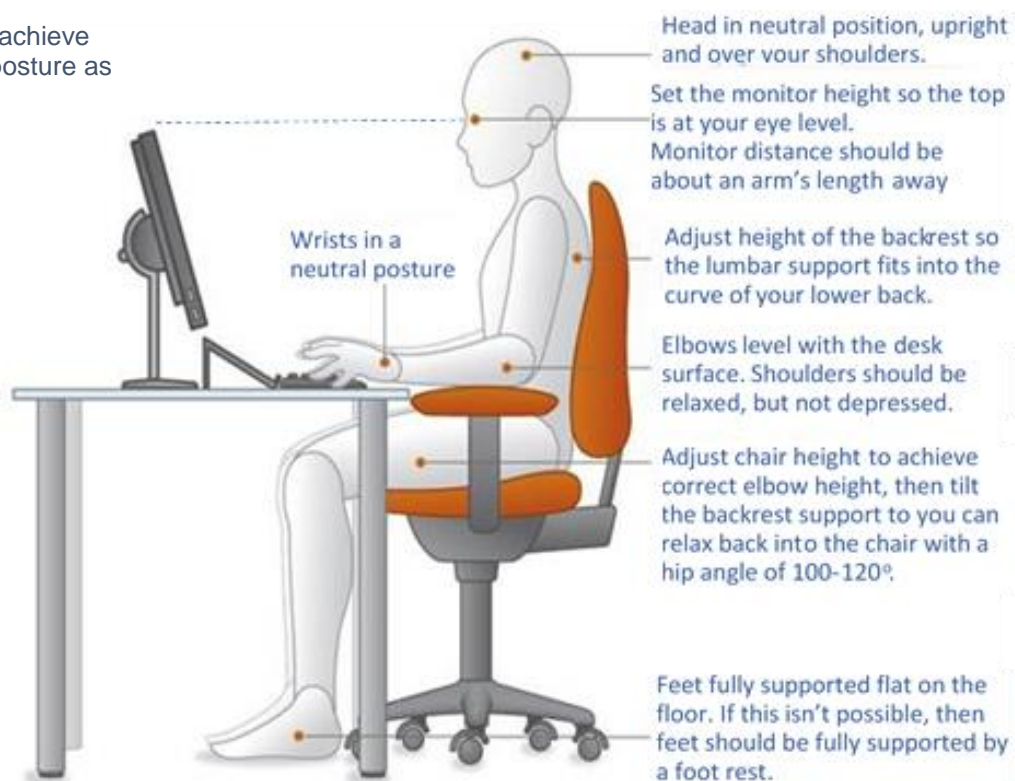
Check your workstation set-up

Setting up your workstation properly encourages good posture and minimises risk of discomfort and injury.

Adjust your chair to achieve comfortable working posture as shown (right).

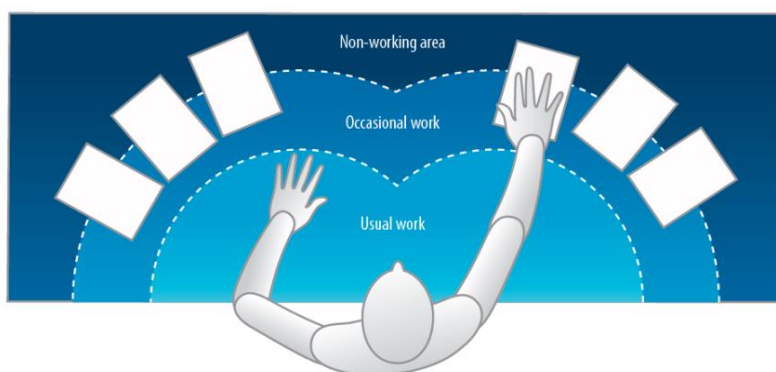
Elements include:

- Chair height
- Back rest
- Lumbar support
- Arm rests
- Seat pan/depth
- Stable base



Adjust your monitor to achieve a comfortable posture. This can be achieved through:

- Appropriate distance - consider your vision, glasses (if worn) font size and screen resolution.
- Height and Location – monitor directly in front with top of monitor at eye level.



Organise your desk/work surface as illustrated above.

- Keep frequently used items close to you and within easy reach.
- Take opportunities to change posture e.g. stand to access items that are in the non-working area.