



Laptop Brief

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Laptop computers are a part of many people's lives today. While they improve work efficiency and increase recreational possibilities, laptops are creating havoc for our upper bodies. Laptops were originally designed for portability and short-duration use. However, their use has changed due to improved speed and storage capabilities, which enables many people to replace desktop computers with only a laptop

Laptops are designed to be used ON YOUR LAP... Continuous use of a laptop significantly increases your risk for a potentially disabling injuries. Apply the following ergonomic principles when using a laptop. Do not forget to take a micro break at least once an hour to stretch the upper body (see next page for stretches):

1. Attach an external mouse and keyboard whenever possible. A PS/2 "Y" cable or USB hub might be necessary to attach both input devices. In some cases, such as with the IBM Think Pad, splitter cables and "Y" cables do not work. In that case, it's generally possible to use two ports on the laptop to plug in the mouse and keyboard. If there is a USB and a PS/2 port, purchase devices with compatible connectors, one of each type.
2. Keep the keyboard and mouse at the edge of the worksurface that is set 1" below or equal to your "sitting elbow height" (this is the measurement from your bent elbow to the floor while seating with fit firmly on the floor)
3. If the work surface is not adjustable, use a keyboard tray to hold external devices at the correct height. Any small, height adjustable tables will work fine for office or home.
4. Move the laptop close enough so you do not hold your head forward to see what is on the screen.
5. Raise the laptop so the top of the screen is at your straight-ahead vision. We suggest you use one of the adjustable monitor stands or laptop holders when you have a fixed workstation where you use the laptop, specially if using the laptop for prolonged periods of time.
6. Sit back in the chair and keep your head directly over your shoulders.
7. Do not lean on the worksurface while typing; keep your elbows in line with your shoulders, hanging loosely at your sides.
8. Never drop your wrists on the "wristrest" of the laptop. Instead, move your hands freely across the keyboard; keep hands in line with elbows.
9. Use keyboard commands whenever possible.
10. Avoid reflective lighting. Adjust screen brightness to a comfortable level.
11. Keep screen clean at all times.

When traveling (with a laptop):

1. Refrain from packing non-essential items or extra gadgets (but don't forget the mouse).
2. Avoid working on the hotel bed or at a high table.
3. Use a small pillow to support your lower back in the car/on the plane.
4. Carry the laptop in a backpack instead of a shoulder or handbag. There are many options on the market.
5. If you must use the laptop without external devices and monitor stand, it is best used in your lap (as it was designed!) or on a worksurface no higher than 27". Support your feet with a portable footrest (or pillow or baggage) if your knees are much lower than your hips and your low back is not being supported.

STRETCH! IMPROVE NECK, SHOULDER AND UPPER BACK COMFORT

Correct Posture



Head Tilt and Turn (for head and neck)



STRETCHING IS NATURAL: How did stretching get to be so time-consuming, embarrassing and awkward? It's really not that big a deal and it feels wonderful. Just watch your dog or cat! They'll show you how to do it!

REMEMBERING TO STRETCH: Do you forget to take breaks and stretch? It's easy to download and install a [break reminder](#) on your computer. Or you can just purchase a small digital timer to keep with you while you work to remind you to stop working occasionally, take a break, and stretch.

HOW TO STRETCH: Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight tension. Hold this for 5 to 20 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, ease off slightly. After holding the easy stretch, you can move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension. Again, the tension should diminish or stay the same. If the tension increases or becomes painful, you are overstretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. **NEVER HOLD A STRETCH THAT CAUSES PAIN.** Stretching reduces tension, increases blood flow, and will gradually improve flexibility. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmical. Don't worry about how far you can stretch. Note: If you have had recent surgery, or have a muscle or joint problem, please consult your health care professional before starting a stretching program.