

Home working with portable electronic devices (PEDS)

Dos

Raise head - To reduce the load on the neck, raise the device up on cushions on your lap at home or on a stand if you have one.

Hold your phone upright - Your neutral neck posture is the one you would adopt if you were standing or sitting straight and looking at a target that is between eye height and 15° below the horizontal line at your eyes. Lift your phone up to keep your neck close to your neutral posture and reduce strain on your neck muscles.

Rest your arms - If possible find a way to rest your arms while holding your screen higher. This will help to reduce the strain on your shoulder muscles. If you are not able to find or use arm support, hold your phone up but try to minimise the time you spend on task. Take frequent breaks to rest your neck and shoulders. Alternatively, if it is a sustained text entry activity, consider whether you could either put the task off until later and/or use an external keyboard.

Use a stylus to vary (and improve) wrist posture - Using a stylus is a useful way of varying wrist posture if you have to do a lot of tapping on a tablet or smartphone screen. Using a stylus can help you maintain a more neutral wrist posture if your screen is not horizontal

Typing on portable electronic devices (PEDs) creates unhealthy postures and forces for your fingers and thumbs. Avoid this by:

- Keeping email replies and texts short
- Typing with as many fingers as possible using both hands
- Using voice recognition
- Making a phone call instead
- Taking plenty of breaks and changing posture frequently when prolonged typing is unavoidable.

Use written notes and voice memos to avoid typing into devices

If you do not have or cannot use a laptop in the circumstances, could you write down the information / message and transcribe it later once you are at a computer / laptop or leave yourself voice memos?

Make use of dictation and voice control facilities

If you are using tablet or phone intensively while in private, consider using the voice dictation functions to reduce typing, or use an external keyboard.

Use voice texting to keep typing to a minimum

Instead of typing out a long text, you could simply record your message in a short clip and send it via text messenger app. Just hold your finger on the microphone key on the messenger app keyboard and start recording. Release your finger when you have finished recording and slide up – your clip will be sent via text message that keeps it in your message exchange timeline. This will not always be feasible or appropriate but when you can do this, it is a useful way of reducing musculoskeletal risk.

Don'ts

Try and avoid using mobile phones or tablets for a long time. Prolonged use of PEDs in one posture, especially when using only one hand, can cause constant muscle tension in shoulders and elbows. In use, we tend to keep PEDs low down and close to our body. This flexes the neck unnecessarily.

If you use a device when lying down, think about neck flexion and extension. Your supported body may lead you to think you have a good posture but, if your neck is bent too far back (lying on your stomach) or forward (lying on your back), you will soon start to feel the pain.

Avoid using a single-thumb style - Single-thumb is the most commonly used inputting style on smartphones – it is also the highest risk for your thumb and wrist. Some suggestions for reducing this risk include;

- Holding your phone in one hand and input with the forefinger of the other hand (or alternatively you could use a stylus).
- For longer text entry use an external keyboard (preferable if feasible) or hold you phone in both hands and type using both thumbs (sharing the load).

Little finger at side not at base -Avoid holding your phone with your little finger at the base.