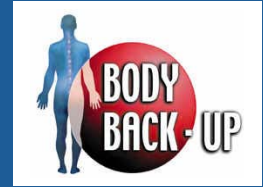


Laptop Alert

tips & techniques for a healthier back



Osteopathy &
Sports Injury Clinic

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Are laptops harmless?

Notebook computers often referred to as 'laptops' tend to be regarded by their users as portable, convenient and harmless.

Convenient they may be but experts are pointing increasingly to health problems connected with their use.

Osteopath Robin Lansman, who sees some patients in his clinics at Maidenhead and London, with problems stemming from laptop use, says:



"Notebooks encourage people to work in a bad posture".

Indeed the very name 'laptop' implies that you can use it in a seated position on

your lap, comfortably and safely.

But this is near to impossible because of the position of the screen relative to the keyboard.

You cannot get your head, shoulders and back into a useful plane – one that will take the strain off the postural supportive muscles.

Some of the problems

- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 suggest keyboard users adjust the position of their workstation so that their arms work approximately horizontal and their eyes are at the same height as the top of the VDU casing.
- Unless a notebook with a telescoping screen is produced, this position is impossible to achieve.
- Raising the screen by placing it on a fat book, for example, may correct the head and neck alignment but then the arms and wrists will be at an uncomfortable angle.
- This means that those doing long stints in front of their notebook are at risk of developing musculo-skeletal strains, pains and possibly longer-term problems, including chronic upper-limb disorders.
- To get around this, you can, of course, attach a separate monitor and keyboard – but this practice will somewhat detract from the convenience factor!
- Other features of laptop use add to the problems. The keyboards are usually more cramped than the standard versions, and there is always the strain of carrying around the notebook with all its paraphernalia.

- The carrying case not only includes the PC, but typically also a mains power adapter, extra batteries, and peripherals such as a compact printer, modem, rechargers and the like.
- Plus, the small screen size of many of these laptops adds to the potential for eyestrain.
- This is not to say that your friendly laptop should be a 'no-go' area.
- Notebooks pose no significant risk when used for brief periods, and many problems can be avoided by adopting better working practices, and by taking more care.

Our tips will help reduce risk . . .

- The best way to use a laptop while travelling, or otherwise out of the office, is intermittently.
- At home or at work, attach a full size keyboard (most modern laptops allow this) while raising the notebook screen to a proper height, with the help of some fat books.
- Change posture frequently when using a laptop.
- Get up, move around and stretch at regular intervals.
- If the situation requires you to use a laptop on your knees, raise it up to a better height with the aid of a book, pillows, or rolled up coat.
- Angle the screen as best you can to avoid straining your neck.
- If you cannot find a chair with adequate back support, put a cushion or rolled up coat or jumper into the hollow of your back to add support. Blow up travel cushions are useful for this purpose.
- Place the keyboard directly in front of you, and leave room on the table, if possible, to rest your wrists.
- Adjust the seat so that your arms are level with the tabletop.
- If your notebook has tiny built in trackballs or pointer devices, consider getting a full size mouse to use with it instead.
- Keep your arm supported when using these device.
- To ease eye strain, experiment with larger on-screen font sizes, or zoom in to make text larger and easier to see.
- Choose pleasing high-contrast colour combinations for text, title and menu bars.

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tips for laptop users

Tips (continued . . .)

- Adjust brightness and contrast settings as light conditions change.
- Consider a more ergonomically friendly way of carting your laptop gear around. Carrying a heavy weight on one side can cause muscle strain, so use two cases instead of one or a specially arranged backpack – or even a case on wheels.
- If buying a notebook, look for one with a larger screen, such as the latest 12 or even 13 inch models.
- Ensure you can attach an external monitor and keyboard, and check the total weight you will have to carry, including peripherals.
- Make sure the pointing device and keyboard are comfortable to use.

Posture help

A computer program to help laptop users achieve good working practices has recently been launched by Thames Valley Training Agency.

Taking about ten minutes, the Laptop User Training Programme gives some useful tips about seating, posture and the practical use of a laptop, including suggested stretching exercises, to limber up neck and back muscles.

We can check your posture on-line

- Email two clear photographs
- Show us your sitting positions at your PC or Laptop
- We can also check out your sitting position in your vehicle.



The photographs must be no bigger than 1Mb showing a:

- Side view
- Oblique view

Pictures and your contact details can be submitted to:
practice@bodybackup.co.uk

In return you will receive a short report telling you:

- If your desk layout is correct and what to do if it isn't!
- If your work chair or car seat is set-up correctly and how to adjust the position if it's not.
- If your posture position is correct, and if it isn't what to do.
- Our Posture-Check service is available to all registered patients as part of their consultation.
- The on-line report does not replace the need for a full evaluation of your condition that is done during a consultation with a Body Back-Up Osteopath.

Flexi-Body Check

We can electronically assess your body balance before and after treatment to see the difference it has made.

This will indicate your level of stability, as well as which parts of your body are working well in a co-ordinated way; and exactly where you need treatment.



Posture Alert

Posture 'Alert' is an Audio posture correcting device, which is designed to help you develop healthy body posture habits and will beep every time you slouch or adopt poor body posture.

This simple and effective audio reminder prompts you to instantly correct your posture until you have built a lasting habit of sitting and standing in a healthy way.

One of the things it is specifically designed for is adults who spend long hours sitting at a desk or working in front of a computer.. Call us to find out more!

Poor Posture?

Poor posture, flexibility & body balance could be the root cause of some of your aches & pains.

*Let us check out your:
Posture - with our on line
Posture-Check*

*Body's flexibility - with our
Flexi-Body Check*



**To find out more about Body Back-Up
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