

Mentally HEALTHY WORKPLACES



Government
of South Australia

Ergonomic Issues It's all about the distance

- ▶ We have been talking about distance recently – with social distancing, distancing in meetings, in lifts, in queues... Distances also feature strongly in setting up to work from home effectively and safely.

If you have recently started working from home, you have probably completed a Work From Home (WFH) checklist and have ticked the box to confirm that your home workstation was ergonomic with no issues.

However, after a few days into this new way of working you might notice things aren't quite right.

Everyone is different and it can be a bit of a juggle to get the optimal solution for you. Sometimes it's just not possible to get all these factors right with what you have on hand.

Here are some of the common issues along with some solutions you could try in case you've had them too...

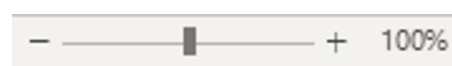
Aching neck or headache?

1. Check screen distance from your face

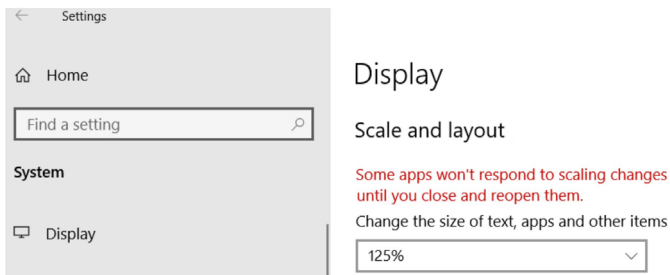
It's important to position your screen so that you are not leaning forwards to see it- as it puts a strain on your back and neck.

If you wear glasses for computer use, then the focal length will have been set to be optimal for your main workstation – so try and replicate that distance.

Sometimes this means that the text on your device appears very small. If that's the case, then reset the text size- either in each application by using the slider at the bottom right hand corner of your screen



or in settings under the display option.



2. Check keyboard distance from your body

The mantra here is that you should be able to reach your keyboard whilst your elbows remain below your shoulders.

If you are reaching forwards to key so that your elbows are in front of your shoulders, you are cumulatively adding strain to the muscles that connect your shoulders and your neck. You can also be contributing to wrist, forearm and elbow strain.

If you are using an integrated keyboard you are forced to choose between an optimal keying and optimal screen distance. This may be acceptable in the short term but is problematic over longer periods and you are likely to require a separate keyboard and mouse.

3. Check shoulder distance from your ears

This one sounds silly, but it's easy to miss. Sometimes we compensate for a mismatch between chair and table height by hunching our shoulders.

As with reaching forwards, this causes a cumulative strain to the muscles between shoulder and neck which can become tight and painful.

Aching back?

1. Check feet distance from the floor

Your feet should be flat to the floor and under your knees.

Why? So that you can sit on your sitting bones (those bony points in your bottom), giving maximal support to your spine without over-using your back muscles.

If you are slouching because the surface is too low, you are prone to low backache. The standard desk height is 710mm. If your work surface is lower than that, it could be preventing you from sitting up.

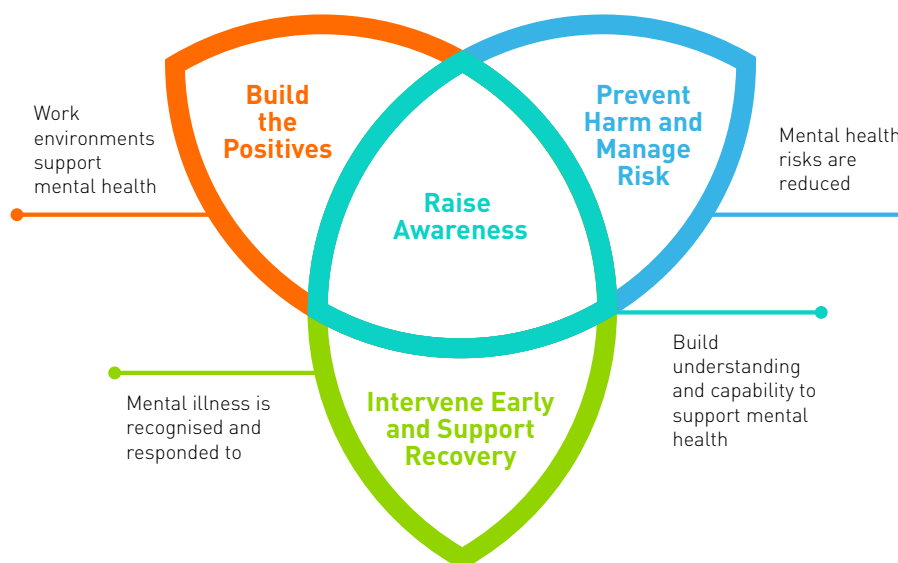
Alternatively, if your work surface is too high then you probably need to find something to put your feet on.

2. Check how often you stand up and move

We are all susceptible to moving a lot less than we are used to when working at home - don't forget to take regular movement breaks.

They don't have to be long- just a minute or so of standing and walking every half hour makes a big difference.

Mentally HEALTHY WORKPLACES FRAMEWORK



Stay safe. Stay well. Stay connected. Look after each other. We will get through this.