

Computing Safely with Laptops

Ergonomic and safety precautions laptop users

Laptops have made accessing work a whole lot easier and more mobile too. However, according to Cornell University, they pose ergonomic dangers to users because of their fixed design. For instance, if the keyboard is in the optimal position for the user, then the screen generally is not.

There are remedies that laptop users can carry out to reduce pain in their hands, wrists, shoulders, neck and back. In fact, many are the same ergonomic adjustments that desktop users do all the time to make working at a computer much easier on the body.

General Precautions

- Use a full-sized keyboard and mouse whenever possible. Simply attach these devices to your laptop.
- Prop the laptop up so that the screen is level with your eyes to avoid constantly looking down.
- Maintain an arm's length away from the screen to avoid eye strain.
- Keep your shoulders, hips and ears aligned.

- Keep your wrists straight while typing and position the keyboard at elbow height.
- When seated at a desk, make sure your hips are slightly higher than your knees.
- Do not rest your wrists or palms on the table or laptop while typing. Instead, keep your hands and wrists straight.
- Take short breaks every 20 to 30 minutes to allow your body to recover from any strains.

Battery Precautions

- Never use an incompatible replacement battery or charger with your laptop. If you are unsure of which one to use, contact the computer manufacturer.
- Never place the laptop on your lap because it can get extremely hot.

- Never allow a loose battery to come in contact with metal objects such as jewelry or keys.
- Be careful not to get the laptop or battery wet. Though they appear to dry over time, water can corrode the circuitry and could pose a serious safety hazard to the user.

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The Smallest of Injuries...

When using a laptop mouse, you are using far fewer muscles than a traditional mouse; however, you are increasing the static muscle tension in your index finger. This can cause fatigue in the muscles and eventually lead to soreness.