



Netcare Waterfall
City Hospital



SLOUCH POTATO

We look at bad computer posture related to upper limb syndromes and give tips for an ergonomic workstation at home

Our work lives have changed dramatically during the pandemic, leading to large numbers of people working from home. This often means working hunched on your bed or leaning over your dining room table, as opposed to your well put together office workstation. This can lead to a myriad of painful hand, wrist, and elbow problems.



IMAGE COURTESY OF CHRONIC PAIN AND ILLNESS

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

A long-standing association exists between personal computer usage and the compression of the median nerve at the wrist. Patients usually complain of dull wrist pain with numbness or pins and needles radiating to the thumb and index finger. Although more common on the dominant hand, it can occur in both wrists. Treatment usually involves hand therapy for nerve glide exercises and strengthening, with surgical releases for refractory cases.

This can be circumvented by using a wrist support in front of your keyboard and occasionally squeezing a stress

ball to avoid long typing hours with the wrist in a flexed position.

CUBITAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

Compression of the ulna nerve at the elbow can occur when keeping your elbows in a flexed (bent) position for long periods. A chair with a rigid armrest upon which the flexed elbow is positioned for an extended time

can also cause this. Symptoms usually consist of pain on the inside of the elbow with pins and needles radiating down the forearm and a clawed posture of the little and ring fingers. Therapy with nerve glide exercises and sometimes splinting the hand can improve symptoms, with surgical release

performed for refractory cases.

A simple set-up of maintaining a maximum of 90 degrees of elbow flexion, when seated and typing for long periods, can reduce nerve



IMAGE COURTESY OF CHRONIC PAIN AND ILLNESS

Good sitting Ergonomics: Hips, knees and elbows ideally at a 90 degree angle



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compression and symptoms. Taking appropriate breaks and doing stretching exercises in extension can also assist with relief. A choice of an ergonomic chair with a well-padded elbow rest is best.

A simple tip to improve your posture is to follow the 90/90/90 rule. Keeping your screen at eye level reduces neck pain, whilst having the correct elbow and wrist reach with a well-padded armrest chair will reduce wrist and elbow pain and nerve compressions.