



Workstation Ergonomics Guideline

1. Guiding Principles

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) is committed to providing a safe work environment and achieving high standards of safety and health for its employees, contractors and visitors. Mechanisms in place to achieve this are outlined in the [WACHS Occupational Safety and Health Policy](#) and supported by the [WACHS Occupational Safety and Health Management Framework](#) (Appendix 1 of the Policy).

Workstation ergonomic hazards and injuries are to be identified, assessed, controlled and reviewed using this guideline and the self-assessment checklist as a starting point. These documents outline good ergonomic practices, the process to be followed before progressing to the request of a sit-stand workstation, risk controls, and a suitable standing posture when using a sit-stand workstation.

2. Guideline

Risk of injury and discomfort can be minimised when the work environment is arranged to fit the user. This document guides all WACHS staff on the process of assessing workstations and identifying, reporting and rectifying ergonomic hazards, and utilisation of the WACHS [Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist](#).

2.1 Hazards associated with workstations and work practices

Workstation configuration and work practices may present ergonomic hazards for office workers and may contribute to the development of Musculoskeletal Disorders¹. For example:

- repetitive tasks, such as prolonged intense keyboard use
- human variability, such as equipment not functioning as intended when an individual has a certain characteristic - e.g. height, vision
- tools and equipment not the best design, or not fit for purpose
- manual handling tasks e.g. lifting, pulling, pushing items and objects
- cognitive and mental fatigue e.g. high vision demands, sustained mental effort and peak demands or set work rates
- layout of work area e.g. desk clutter, placement of frequently used items, and
- environmental factors which may impact cognition e.g. lighting, noise, climate.

2.2 Identify, assess, report and rectify an ergonomic issue

If an employee identifies an ergonomic issue with their workstation, they are to report it to their line manager. The line manager is to then:

- provide the employee with the WACHS [Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist](#).
- assist the employee to complete the checklist, and make the necessary changes.

¹ Musculoskeletal Disorders are conditions characterised by discomfort or persistent pain in muscles, tendons or other soft tissues.

In the event that an issue cannot be rectified using the prompts in the WACHS Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist, the manager is to seek further guidance from the Regional Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator.

If a review with an OSH Coordinator cannot be completed and further guidance is required, a referral to a Workplace Rehabilitation Provider qualified in conducting ergonomic assessments is recommended. External rehabilitation providers charge to conduct this service. It is the responsibility of each department to pay for these services as required.

2.3 Good ergonomic work practices – controlling the risk

General good ergonomic work practices are to be applied before progressing to the use of a sit-stand workstation. [Section 6 – Risk Control](#) of this document contains strategies to introduce more daily movement, with the aim of using a variety of postures throughout the working day, maintaining one posture for no longer than 20-30 minutes.

2.4 Risks of prolonged standing

While there can be benefits of moving between sitting and standing positions, prolonged standing can present its own risks to an employee's health, such as the potential for:

- increased strain on legs and feet
- discomfort and/or increased symptoms for people with existing neck, back, shoulder, hip, knee, ankle or foot problems
- increased pressure on cartilage in the knees, hips and balls of the feet
- “bad” standing postures, which can lead to locking knees, weaker abdominal muscles (causes people to sway back), or standing on one leg (causing asymmetry throughout the entire spine) to obtain relief
- decreased privacy due to standing above colleagues.

3. Process to manage a request for a sit-stand desk

This process is to be followed to manage a sit-stand desk query or request:

3.1 Employee to submit written request

The employee is to submit a written request for a sit-stand desk for their workstation to their line manager for consideration, with a completed [Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist](#).

3.2 Line manager to meet with employee

The line manager is to meet with the employee to discuss issues or concerns and:

- review the completed [Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist](#) with the employee and use the prompts to make adjustments where possible. (This step may be completed with assistance from the regional OSH department as necessary and available).
- consider the type of work and whether it is suited to a sit-stand workstation
- determine if the workstation is for individual or shared use

- determine workstation location and functionality
- review daily tasks and duties undertaken by employee
- review existing health issues of employee and physical factors as appropriate i.e. at this stage medical evidence from a health professional may be requested, and
- review the effectiveness of any management strategies currently in place.

3.3 Further advice

For risks that cannot be remedied, the line manager is to seek advice from the regional OSH department or a Workplace Rehabilitation Provider qualified in conducting ergonomic assessments. It is the responsibility of each department to pay for these services as required.

3.4 Recommended sit-stand desk configuration and posture

To view the recommended configuration and posture for using a sit-stand desk, please refer to [Appendix A](#). Employees are encouraged to vary their posture, to prevent remaining standing and static for an entire day of work. (Same rules apply for sitting i.e. important to change postures regularly).

4. Definitions

Ergonomics	The study of the relationship between workers and their environment and how the workplace is designed to maximise performance.
Employee	A person employed directly by WACHS via a contract of employment.
Hazard	A situation or item that has the potential to harm people, property or the environment.
Risk	The possibility of an unwanted event occurring measured in terms of the possible consequences and likelihood of the event occurring.
Line Manager /Supervisor	A person responsible or delegated responsibility to ensure oversight and compliance of this guideline in the workplace.
Safety and Health Representative	An employee properly elected under Part IV Division 1 of the OSH Act to represent other employees in the interests of safety and health at the workplace for which they were elected.
Workplace	A place where employees are, or are likely to be during the course of their work. This includes attendance at offsite locations and travel in a government vehicle during the course of work.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Supervisors and Managers

Supervisors and Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring that ergonomic hazards relating to poor design of tools, equipment, work station or work practices are identified and the associated risks controlled
- ensuring ergonomic assessments of workstations are conducted and controls are implemented
- ensuring that all employees have been provided with adequate equipment for tasks undertaken
- organising/authorising any modifications/equipment requirements identified through assessment (although guidance and assistance may be sought from the site OSH department)
- encouraging and reinforcing correct working techniques
- ensuring that records of the ergonomic assessments and medical advice is maintained
- seeking guidance from the regional OSH department where necessary.

5.2 Regional OSH Coordinator

The Regional OSH Coordinator is responsible for providing:

- advice and consulting with managers and staff on how to manage hazards and risks that have been identified and raised via [WACHS Safety Risk Report Form \(SRRF\)](#) reporting
- information on how to initiate a referral to the appropriate personnel if required (e.g. Ergonomist, Rehabilitation Provider, and Occupational Therapist) to provide technical advice on ergonomic matters that fall outside the scope of what WACHS guidelines provide.
- Provide in-house ergonomic assessment of a workstation as referred by the staff members manager

5.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- maintaining an optimal workstation for themselves and their colleagues by correctly using furniture, equipment and accessories with good ergonomic practices (e.g. Docking laptops onto support stands)
- participating in the identification of hazards associated with their workstation by completing ergonomic self-assessments and reporting task-related and equipment-related hazards as required
- participating in training as provided
- following proper working techniques including safe work instructions
- reporting all hazards, incidents, injuries, dangerous occurrences and system failures in a timely manner which occur or have the potential to occur using the [WACHS Safety Risk Report Form \(SRRF\)](#)
- using all safety equipment provided by WACHS that is relevant to the task.

6. Risk Control

For any ergonomic hazards identified during the assessment, controls are to be established and implemented with the intent of reducing risk to *as low as reasonably practicable* (ALARP).

Examples of ergonomic controls may include:

- All new, redeveloped or modified office accommodation designs should have provision for electronically height adjustable desks as a preferred inclusion, where suitable. Easily accessible desktop power and data points with safe cable management alternatives are also desirable.
- eliminating the task (is there a better way to do the task?)
- changing the nature of the task to remove repetition
- changing workstation layout and design which might include repositioning items that are used frequently in close proximity of the user (e.g. Telephone)
- changing chairs that do not adjust to the suit the user for suitable alternatives
- removing unused material and items to increase desk space
- providing material on how to set up shortcuts on your keyboard, and
- providing information to employees on the importance of rest breaks and stretching.

Many controls may be considered and implemented before purchasing a sit-stand desk.

Varying posture when sitting is the best method for avoiding static positions throughout the day. Examples of these controls are to:

- walk over and talk to colleagues instead of emailing them
- use central located bins and printers
- dispose of waste and/or collect printing more frequently
- drink more water so you go to the water cooler (and bathroom) more often
- use a bathroom that is further away
- step outside for fresh air
- use the stairs instead of the lift
- use an active method of commuting to work (walk or ride a bike, stand up in the train, or stand up to wait for your train/bus)
- park your car further away from your workplace and walk to work, or park in short-term parking so you have to walk back to move your car
- have lunch away from your desk
- take a walk at lunchtime and mark out two or three timed walking routes to fit into your working day and promote variety
- walk laps of the floor at regular intervals to break up the day
- design your work space so that you have to stand up to access files and resources occasionally
- set a reminder on your computer for every 30-40 minutes to stand up have a stretch, and to change your posture
- use Computer Breaks pop-up (these are available upon request through IT)
- have a standing/walking meeting if you are having a meeting with only one or two people and don't need paper

- get a portable handset and walk whilst on the phone
- stand up for reading tasks
- consider setting up a shared/communal standing 'hot desk' station for all the staff in your work area i.e. Purchase 2-3 for the department rather than one individual station.

7. Compliance

This policy is a mandatory requirement under the [Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#).

Failure to comply with this guideline may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

8. Records Management

Medical records regarding employees are to be stored with privileged access only.

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System.

[Records Management Policy](#)

9. Evaluation

This policy is to be reviewed in five years (or sooner if required) by the WACHS Central Officer Occupational Safety and Health Coordinator.

10. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)

Standard 1: Governance, leadership and culture - 1.1a, 1.7c, 1.10a, 1.10c.

11. Legislation

[Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#) and [Occupational Safety and Health Regulation 1996](#)

12. References

[Code of Practice Manual tasks: WorkSafe WA](#)
[Good Work Design Principals: Safe Work Australia](#)

[Guidance on the Principals of Safe Design for Work: Australian Government: Canberra May 2006](#)
[Ergonomic Principles and Checklists for the Selection of Office Furniture and Equipment: National Occupational Health and Safety Commission](#)
[Hazardous Manual Tasks: Code Of Practice: Safe Work Australia](#)

13. Related Forms

WACHS [Safety Risk Report Form](#)
WACHS [Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist](#)

14. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Occupational Safety and Health Policy](#)
WACHS [Hazard / Incident Management Procedure](#)

15. Related WA Health System Policies

[WA Health Risk Management Policy](#)

16. Policy Framework

[WA Health Risk Compliance and Audit Framework](#)

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability**

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Appendix A:

STANDING POSTURE

