Workstation Ergonomic Guideline

1. Purpose

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) is committed to providing a safe work environment and achieving high standards of Health and Safety for its workers, contractors and visitors. Mechanisms in place to achieve this are outlined in the WACHS Work Health and Safety 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 Disorders[1].

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
- environmental factors which may impact cognition e.g., lighting, noise, climate.

2.2 Identify, assess, report and rectify an ergonomic issue

If a worker identifies an ergonomic issue with their workstation, they are to report it to their line manager. The line manager is to then:
- provide the worker with the WACHS Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist
- assist the worker 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.

Always source current documents from WACHS HealthPoint Policies.
Copies sourced otherwise are considered uncontrolled.

Page 1 of 9

In the event that an issue cannot be rectified using the prompts in the WACHS Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist, the manager is to seek further guidance from the relevant and nearest Work Health and Safety (WHS) contact.

If a review with an WHS Consultant 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 2.8 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 worker'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.

2.5 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:

Worker to submit written request
The worker 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. Purchase at the discretion of the Manager taking into consideration all relevant information and advice.

Line manager to meet with worker
The line manager is to meet with the worker to discuss issues or concerns and:
- review the completed Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist with the worker and use the prompts to make adjustments where possible. (This step may be completed with assistance from the regional WHS 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 worker
- review existing health issues of worker and physical factors as appropriate i.e., at this stage medical evidence from a health professional may be requested
- review the effectiveness of any management strategies currently in place.

2.6 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. Workers are encouraged to vary their posture, to limit static positioning whether sitting or standing.

2.7 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
- providing information to workers 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 centrally 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 workspace 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.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisors and Managers are responsible for:
- ensuring that ergonomic hazards relating to poor design of tools, equipment, workstation, or work practices are identified and the associated risks controlled
- ensuring ergonomic assessments of workstations are conducted and controls are implemented
- ensuring that all workers 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 WHS department)
- encouraging and reinforcing correct working techniques
- ensuring that records of the ergonomic assessments and medical advice is maintained
- seeking guidance from the regional WHS department where necessary
- able to endorse request for purchase of approved ergonomic equipment.

The **Regional Work Health Safety Consultant** 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
- in-house ergonomic assessment of a workstation as referred by the staff members manager.

Workers 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.

All staff are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Monitoring

Monitoring of this policy will be undertaken by the WACHS WHS Central Office team to ensure its effectiveness, and any further hazards that arise are identified and can be managed appropriately.

4.2 Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as required to determine effectiveness, efficiency and relevance by the WACHS WHS Central Office team.

5. Compliance

This policy is a mandatory requirement under the _Work Health Safety Act 2020_ (WHS Act).

Guidelines are designed to provide staff with evidence-based recommendations to support appropriate actions in specific settings and circumstances. As such, WACHS guidelines should be followed in the first instance. In the clinical context, where a patient's management should vary from an endorsed WACHS guideline, this variation and the clinical opinion as to reasons for variation must be documented in accordance with the Documentation Clinical Practice Standard.

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

6. References

Code of practice - Hazardous Manual Tasks
Principles of Good Work Design | Safe Work Australia
Guidance on the Principals of Safe Design for Work: Australian Government: May 2006
Ergonomic Principles and Checklists for the Selection of Office Furniture and Equipment:
National Occupational Health and Safety Commission
National Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Ergonomics	The study of the relationship between workers and their environment and how the workplace is designed to maximise performance.
Worker	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.
Health and Safety Representative (HSR)	An worker properly elected under s.60 of the WHS Act to represent other workers in the interests of safety and health at the workplace for which they were elected.
Workplace	A place where workers 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.

8. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS wide
Audience	All staff
Records Management	Non Clinical: Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy
Related Legislation	*Work Health and Safety Act 2020* Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	• MP 0006/16 - Risk Management Policy • MP 0180/23 - Work Health and Safety Management Policy • Risk Compliance and Audit Framework • Work Health and Safety Framework
Related WACHS Policy Documents	• Work Health and Safety Policy • Hazard / Incident Management Procedure
Other Related Documents	Nil
Related Forms	• Safety Risk Report Form • Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist
Related Training Packages	Nil
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 2711
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	1.1a, 1.7c, 1.10a, 1.10c.
Aged Care Quality Standards	Nil
National Standards for Mental Health Services	Nil

9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
3.01	4 December 2023	14 September 2021	Minor review including: • legislative updates in line with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* • Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist removed from HealthPoint and now available via TRIM link • guidance for managers following receipt of a Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist.
3.02	19 December 2023	14 September 2021	• Work Station Self-Assessment Checklist removed from HealthPoint and replaced with TRIM link and Safety Risk Report Form link replaced with TRIM link.

10. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director People, Capability and Culture
Co-approver	N/A
Contact	Director Work Health Safety and Wellbeing
Business Unit	People, Capability and Culture
EDRMS #	ED-CO-14-90992
Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.	

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Appendix A: Recommended sit stand desk configuration and posture

MONITOR

The top of the monitor should be at or slightly below eye level.

ARMS

Arms should be relaxed. Elbows should be bent at a 90° angle. Wrists should be relaxed, but straight.

CHAIR

Hips should be as far back as possible. Curve in lower back should have support.

LEGS

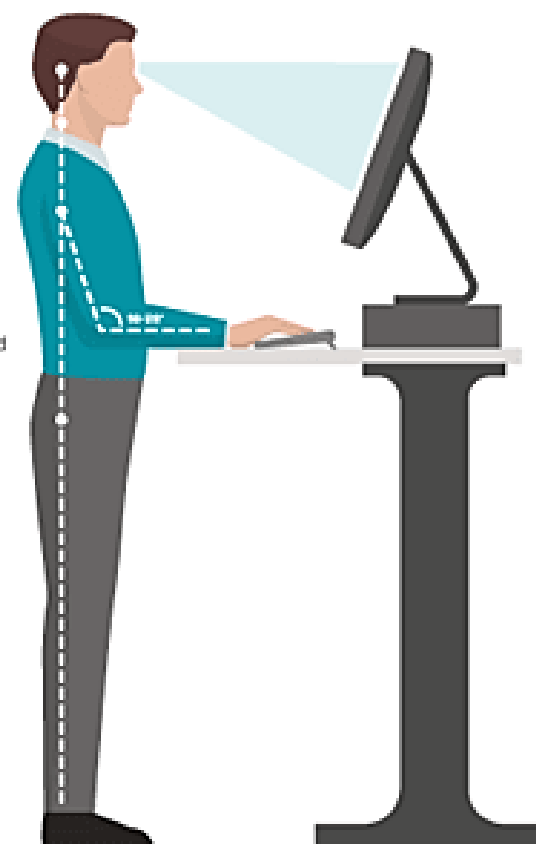Thighs should be parallel to the floor. Some folks may benefit from a small footrest.

FEET

Feet should have plenty of room. A footrest can be helpful for workers with shorter legs.

18/29 in (45-78 cm)

A standing workstation may also be used.

The same principles apply for monitor height and line-of-sight and the arms should still be relaxed with the elbows bent at about 90°.

CORRECT SITTING POSITION

CORRECT STANDING POSITION

Always source current documents from WACHS HealthPoint Policies.
Copies sourced otherwise are considered uncontrolled.

Page 9 of 9