



## SAFE USE OF A LAPTOP

Notebook computers were initially designed to be used for short periods only – e.g. when traveling. However over time their use has extended with some people now using a laptop as their primary computer and others frequently alternating between using a PC at work and a laptop at home.

Frequent laptop use can cause discomfort, pain and injury to the neck, shoulders and arms, given that:

- The keyboard is normally smaller
- Mouse devices may require more finger dexterity to use
- The keyboard and monitor are attached, so that their positions cant be adjusted independently – this often means you are working with your neck bent down
- As well, laptops can become quite hot underneath if used for long periods of time.

The following are some basic principals to follow when using a laptop to ensure your comfort and safety:

- If you are an occasional laptop user, sit in an armless chair with good back support and put the laptop in your lap, using a book or pillow to elevate it a few inches. Using the laptop whilst on a stool, sitting on a couch or whilst propped up in bed won't provide you with adequate back support. Also consider using a footrest to support your feet and help raise the screen height. Angle the laptop screen so that you can see this with the least amount of neck deviation.

For full time laptop users (i.e. if you use your laptop at work as your main computer or use it at home for extended periods):

- Position the laptop on a desk/work surface in front of you so that you can see the screen without bending your neck. You need to raise the height of the laptop so that the top of the screen is just below eye level – you can either use a telephone book or purchase a purpose-designed laptop stand (these laptop stands tend to be quite lightweight and portable and sit on top of the desk)
- Use a separate keyboard and mouse
- When transporting the laptop, remove any peripherals you don't need (e.g. removable CD-Rom drives) to reduce the bag's weight and the subsequent stress-and-strain on your shoulders. Alternate the shoulder with which you carry the bag.
- Even better, try to get a laptop carry bag on wheels.

