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## Global Newsletter October 2008



### Is your laptop painful?

In the past, the use of laptop computers was reserved for selected, special people in the corporate world, like executives and travelling sales managers. These large and expensive machines were carried around by 'road warriors' who completed their business duties from hotel rooms after a day of meetings.

As portable technology has become faster, lighter and cheaper, laptops have migrated into small businesses, university lecture halls and even our homes. Indeed, if your new laptop is faster than your old computer and can be placed wherever you need it in your home, office, or any other location, then why do you need a traditional 'desktop' computer? Most businesses now don't provide with you with a desktop computer at your office desk if your role warrants having a laptop.

The main downside of this is the increasing number of repetitive strain injury cases. Quite simply, the laptop computer was never designed for long periods of use (especially not a full 8 hour or even 12 hour working day). The main ergonomic design flaw of the screen being attached to the keyboard just does not work in harmony with the optimal positioning of our eyes, head, fingers and wrists. So, the positioning of our laptop ends up being a compromise on both counts – with the keyboard close enough for us to type on, but the screen tilted back so we can read it. Our bodies still end up in a compromised position, with hands navigating a smaller key layout and our necks bent down on an angle, throwing the weight of our heads forward.

If you can't live without your laptop, here are our tips to help it be nicer to your body:

- Take regular breaks. 'Micro breaks' involve looking away from your screen often to something much further away, to let your eyes refocus and rest. Physical movement is important too, including regularly letting your arms drop or even getting up and walking away from your laptop.
- Invest in a separate keyboard and mouse. Laptops have a plug to let them accommodate a full-sized keyboard and mouse, so take advantage of these better ergonomically designed 'input devices' if you are going to be using your laptop for hours.
- Raise your laptop so the screen is at the correct height, or invest in a separate monitor. If you sit back in your chair with a slight recline and hold your right arm out horizontally, your middle finger should almost touch the middle of the screen.
- Watch out for heat build-up if the laptop is going to be on your lap for a prolonged period of time. Consider investing in a special pad or tray designed to reduce the heat problem.
- Invest in a quality bag or backpack. If you travel frequently, perhaps a 'luggage trolley' type bag with wheels would be a better option, to help prevent shoulder strain. Consider the weight factor when buying a new laptop too, including the weight of any associated laptops parts you may have to carry with you.

Talk to your local Computer Troubleshooter about how to stop your laptop being a pain in the neck, wrists, arms, back and shoulders!



**Contact your local Computer  
Troubleshooters**

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