

Employees are encouraged to work at a desk or table. If choices are limited, follow these steps to position yourself in bed. An optimized set-up will improve comfort and efficiency.

Step 1: Support your back

Good back support is important when working in bed. Start by building continuous support from the hips through the shoulder blades. A common mistake is to pile pillows behind your head and the headboard or wall. This results in a very up right or sometimes head-forward posture. An optimal and supported posture is to work in a slight recline. To do this place a rolled-up bath towel behind your hips and stack pillows in decreasing density. Place denser pillows on the bottom to form a firm base of support for the hips and lower back. Tapper soft or flat pillows above the towel to support the mid and upper back comfortably. You will end up with something that look like a wedge. Good quality, low cost upholstered memory foam bed wedges are widely available at home good stores, pharmacies, or medical suppliers. Higher end bed wedge systems are available; however, you can usually replicate these with a foam wedge and pillows or blankets.



Step 2: Elevate knees

With the back supported in a slight recline try to elevate your knees. Use a few firm pillows or a rolled-up towel and place them under your knees and calves. You should feel supported from the knee to ankle. Elevating the knees reduces strain on the lower back and improves circulation through the lower extremities. Wedges are available online. Wedges for the legs are different from ones for the back and are often trapezoids or half circles to allow the knees to be relaxed.



Step 3: Position and Support

Correctly positioning a laptop is difficult while in bed. With your knees elevated you can now work with the laptop...well in your lap. Avoid placing the laptop on a pillow or other soft surface that will restrict airflow. Blocking the laptop's fan may cause it to overheat. Consider using an adjustable overbed table and/or lapdesk to reposition your laptop screen so you can comfortably view the monitor. An overbed table when combined with an external keyboard and mouse will allow you to reposition your laptop to eye level. Raising the monitor to eye-level reduces fatigue associated with looking down at the screen.



When selecting an overbed table ensure that the height of the table fits the bed. Wider and larger surfaces are best. If available, consider tables that tilt and lock into position. The best lapdesks will be wide enough to fit both your laptop and have space for a mouse (approx. 20 inches). Better lapdesks have adjustable cushions attached to the back of the board that allow you to adjust the angle.

Step 4: Change Positions

Every so often, change your position by raising and lowering the knees and adjusting the backrest angle to be upright or reclined. You will want to alternate the backrest between 100° and 120°. Take breaks every 20-30 minutes. Remember to also give your eyes a rest and practice the 20/20/20 rule. Every 20 minutes look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.