When should you consider an ergonomic keyboard?

- The device you mainly use is a laptop
- You use your keyboard a lot of the time
- You experience pain in your fingers, hands, wrists, arms, or shoulders

In one year, it is estimated that an office worker spends 2,080 hours at work and 1,700 hours in front of a computer.

Ergonomic keyboard design features

- Ergonomic design pays special attention to the user, taking into account factors like:
  - Particular needs: Large, spaced, high contrast buttons can help people with vision problems, physical or learning difficulties.
  - Your size: A keyboard that is too big or small can force the hands, arms and shoulders into uncomfortable positions, resulting in unnecessary strain and eventual injuries.
  - Productivity: Hotkeys and media keys can be used to make certain functions faster and easier to access, reducing the amount of hand movement needed.
  - Work environment: How much space do you have on your desk? A large keyboard can create cramped, awkward positions. Wireless versions can save space and help create an uncluttered environment.
  - Personal preference: There are a variety of key types available that vary in height, size, mechanism and tactile feedback. Everyone has their own preferred style.
  - Dominant hand: This can determine where the most important keys are placed. On left-handed keyboards, the number pad is placed on the left side, alternatively use a separate number pad.

Types of ergonomic keyboard

- Full-size keyboard: A traditional style keyboard with integrated number pad designed to improve user experience and increase productivity. The addition of media keys and hotkeys reduce the number of keystrokes.
  - Best suited for: Desktop computers.

- Mini keyboard/compact keyboard: All the crucial keys are rearranged into a smaller body designed to reduce the space between the keyboard and mouse. This helps to minimise stretching and reaching. These are movements that, over time, can increase the risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Mini keyboards are great for use with laptops and tablets as they can easily be slipped into a typical laptop bag.
  - Best suited for: Desktop computing where a number pad is rarely needed, or connecting to your laptop while on the go.

- Split keyboard: Split keyboards help change the position of your hands for more comfortable typing. There are a variety of different shapes to suit different people.
  - Best suited for: Anyone experiencing discomfort using a traditional keyboard.

- Wired or wireless?: A keyboard that plugs in with a USB wire.
  - Best suited for: High security environments, lower budgets, or no need for portability or extra space.

- Speciality keyboard: A keyboard that connects via Bluetooth or wireless USB receiver.
  - Best suited for: On-the-go computing, minimalist desktops with limited space, hot-desking areas and collaboration.

Keyboard positioning

- Overstretching the fingers, usually due to sitting too high
- Avoid these postures: Bending hands up at the wrist, usually due to sitting too low
- Hitting the keys too hard

All of these can be avoided with a correct keyboard set-up.

How to position yourself at your keyboard

- Position your keyboard directly in front of you
- Have it at elbow height so your forearms are perpendicular to the desk
- Your shoulders should be relaxed
- Place close to you when you're sitting back in your chair
- Consider using a separate or slide-away number pad and hide away when not in use

No matter how good your set-up is, remember to take regular microbreaks, frequently take your hands off the keyboard and gently shake, bend and stretch your fingers and hands.