

Incorporating ergonomics while working from home

When working from home, it's important to find a sustainable workstation setup that helps you maintain safe, neutral postures. The cumulative effect of working with laptops, tablets, and mobile phones can increase your risk of chronic neck and shoulder pain, along with repetitive stress injuries to your hands, wrists, and upper extremities.

By applying ergonomic principles to the design and setup of the home office, you can alleviate many of these issues—in turn, making yourself more comfortable and increasing your productivity.

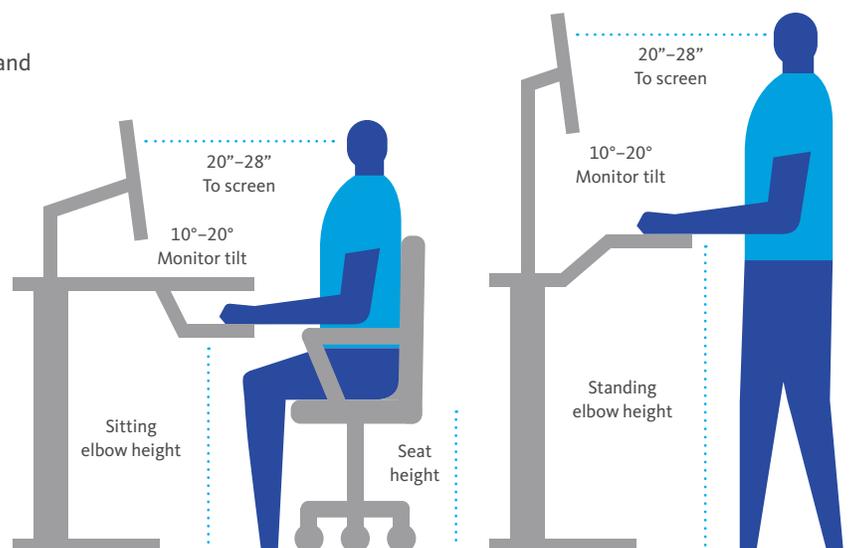
As you assess each aspect of your work-from-home setup, follow these guidelines:

WORKING WHILE STANDING

- Position your screens or monitors approximately an arm's length away, at a height that allows for downward viewing—between 5 and 30 degrees below horizontal.
- Keep your elbows close to your body, with your keyboard around or a little above hip level.
- Keep your wrists flat and your forearms nearly horizontal, with your elbows at 90 degrees or slightly angled down to 120 degrees.
- Keep your shoulders from rounding forward.
- Keep your head set back over your spine.
- Use a footrest or anti-fatigue mat to improve blood flow and increase comfort. Rotate your feet periodically.
- Wear comfortable footwear.

WORKING WHILE SITTING

- Use a chair that allows your seated elbow height to match the height of your work surface or top of the keyboard.
- Adjust your chair height so your feet remain comfortably flat on the floor, with your knees angled slightly below your hips. Support your feet with a box, book, or ream of paper if needed.
- Adjust your backrest to support your lower back (lumbar) area. Use a rolled-up hand towel for additional support, and use a cushion to raise the seat height as needed.
- Adjust your armrest height so your shoulders maintain a neutral position and hang freely at your side. If your armrests are too high, they can cause excessive shrugging. If they're too low, they can cause you to slouch.
- Avoid sitting on the edge of the seat to ensure your back is supported.
- Avoid working at your kitchen table, if possible. These tables often don't allow for proper positioning for your wrists and neck.
- Avoid working from a bed or couch, as they don't provide adequate, sustainable support for your body and low back.



SEATED POSTURE

- Center your body directly in front of the screen and keyboard.
- Sit up straight, with your back against the chair and your lower back supported.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed, not slumped or elevated.
- Keep your forearms level with your wrists or tilted slightly downward.
- Maintain clearance for your knees, thighs, and feet under the desk.

SCREENS/MONITORS

- Place your screen directly in front of you, approximately an arm's length away (at least 20 inches).
- Keep your eyes level, parallel with the top third of the screen.
- If you're using two monitors, position the most-used one directly in front of you, with the less-used monitor to the side in a slight V-shape.
- If you wear bifocals, lower your monitors to below eye level.
- If you're using a laptop, place the laptop on a riser so the top of the screen is at or slightly below eye level. You may need a detached keyboard for neutral arm and wrist posture.

KEYBOARD AND MOUSE

- Position your keyboard directly in front of your body, at elbow height or just below.
- Place your mouse on the same surface and to the side of your keyboard, at the same distance from your body.
- Avoid over-reaching for the keyboard or mouse. Use a detached keyboard, if possible.
- Keep your wrists neutral (straight) and relaxed, with your hands hovering above the keys when typing.
- Use a wrist rest support to help maintain neutral postures when resting.
- Avoid leaning on the edge of your desk or tabletop.

FREQUENTLY USED ITEMS

- Keep frequently used items, such as pens and notepads, close to your body to prevent excessive reaching.
- Stand up to reach items you can't comfortably reach while sitting.

LIGHTING

- Adjust your workstation and/or the room's lighting to avoid direct and reflected light in your field of vision.
- Adjust your blinds or curtains as the light changes throughout the day.

PHONES AND TABLETS

- Avoid holding your phone between your neck and ear, which can place stress on your neck muscles. Instead, use earbuds, headphones, or a speaker phone.
- Use a headset for extended periods of time on the phone.
- Hold mobile phones and tablets up to eye level, and alternate hands when holding these devices.
- Use voice dictation, such as Siri and Cortana, when possible.
- Consider using a tablet holder when using your tablet for extended periods of time.
- Use a stylus pen, if possible.
- Use a desktop computer or laptop, rather than your smartphone, to reply to emails and browse the internet.



BALANCING WORK AND REST

- Avoid long periods of working in one position and using repetitive motions. Change your posture frequently throughout the day to help with circulation. For instance, consider working while standing at a taller counter for a short time.
- Take frequent micro-breaks—10 to 15 seconds at a time—to alleviate long periods of static, seated or standing postures.
- Move around at least once every hour to increase blood flow, improve posture, and reduce fatigue.
- Incorporate the 20/20/20 vision program: Get up every 20 minutes, for 20 seconds at a time, and look off at a distance of at least 20 feet to help reduce visual fatigue.
- If you need a reminder to ensure you consistently take rest breaks, use an app or alarm.
- Maintain a routine, and set clear and defined boundaries between work and personal time. Start each day by getting dressed, reviewing your schedule, making a to-do list, and getting into an at-work mindset.

STRETCHING

Along with getting adequate rest and maintaining a healthy diet, moving and stretching throughout the day is key to establishing healthy work-from-home habits. As you incorporate these movements into your routine, remember this mantra: Move slowly. Don't bounce. Breathe.

- **Stand up and sit down:** Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- **Perform gradual shoulder circles:** Repeat 3 to 5 times in each direction.
- **Stretch and spread your fingers:** Hold for 5 to 10 seconds, and repeat 3 to 5 times.
- **Stretch back with a self-hug:** Hold for 5 to 10 seconds, and repeat 3 to 5 times.
- **Remember, stretching shouldn't be painful.** Stop if you feel discomfort.

Customizing your workstation and developing healthy work-from-home habits can help make work more enjoyable and productive, while also reducing your risk of injury. If you have additional questions on workplace ergonomics or you need assistance, contact us at 800-4SENTRY (800-473-6879). We're happy to help.

Source: 2020, <https://www.ergomaker.com/create-ergonomic-workstation>

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