

Ergonomics

Office Ergonomic Best Practices When Working from Home



When you are working at home (WAH), it is important to ensure that you can perform tasks as comfortably and productively as possible. Using ergonomic best practices can help improve your efficiency and reduce unnecessary physical stressors. The following questions can help create and sustain a safer home work environment.

Selecting the right room/area to work in

- When setting up a WAH office, ask yourself is it quiet enough to accomplish job tasks as planned and free of distractions?
- Are walkways in the immediate area clear of obstruction and trip hazards?
- Is room temperature comfortable (not too hot or cold)?
- Are computer equipment cords long enough and not frayed or worn?
- Is there adequate lighting at your workstation? Too little can cause eye strain and glare can make it more difficult to see the monitor(s)?
- Are outlets or power strips used instead of light duty extension cords?
- When sitting or standing, are feet comfortably flat on the floor?

Choose the right height for your work surface

- When sitting or standing, are you positioned with the desk surface at or slightly below resting elbow height?
- Can you type and operate the mouse with your wrists straight/relatively flat, with no contact stress on your wrists/forearms, and with shoulders down and relaxed?
- Is the top of your monitor(s) at or slightly lower than eye level when seated or standing?
- Is the screen(s) located directly in front of you, centered with your keyboard, and positioned about an arm's length away?

Organize your home office space

- Are things used most frequently (e.g., keyboard, mouse) close to you when sitting or standing? This assumes that when you reach, your back is straight with upper arm(s) at or near vertical to your side and forearms are at near a right angle to the upper arm.
- Are less frequently used items stored bending at the waist awkwardly reaching with hands above shoulder or below waist heights isn't necessary?

Final set-up checks for your chair

- When seated, is there sufficient room to move your knees and feet under the desk without encountering an obstacle?
- Does your chair move easily on the floor?
- Do you have approximately 3 fingers of space between the back of your knee and the leading edge of your chair seat pan when sitting?
- When sitting, are your back regions comfortably supported by the chair lumbar?
- When sitting, do chair armrests allow you to get sufficiently close to the workstation?

Additional tips for a comfortable workspace

- A pillow, cushion, or even folded towels can be used to raise you high enough in the chair so that elbows are level or slightly higher than the keyboard.
- A rolled-up bath towel or pillow can be used to support your lower back.
- If your feet cannot be placed flat on the floor with the altered sitting height, consider placing them on a book, briefcase, or other solid object to keep them supported, with thighs parallel to the floor.
- A stable ironing board can serve as an impromptu adjustable keyboard tray.
- Frequent work breaks are especially important in a mobile computing environment—even brief ones.
 - Listen to the body and take a short break when the first signs or symptoms of discomfort arise.
 - Short stretching exercises, a trip to the bathroom, or a walk to get a cup of coffee are purposeful ways of incorporating breaks into your work-at-home routine.
 - Taking a break to change positions is perhaps the best reason to take a break.

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