



WORK-ABLE NEWS

March 2020

Working from Home Special Edition

Most people don't have the same equipment at home that they have in the office. This was never a problem until we embarked on the largest and perhaps longest, working-from-home endeavor in history.

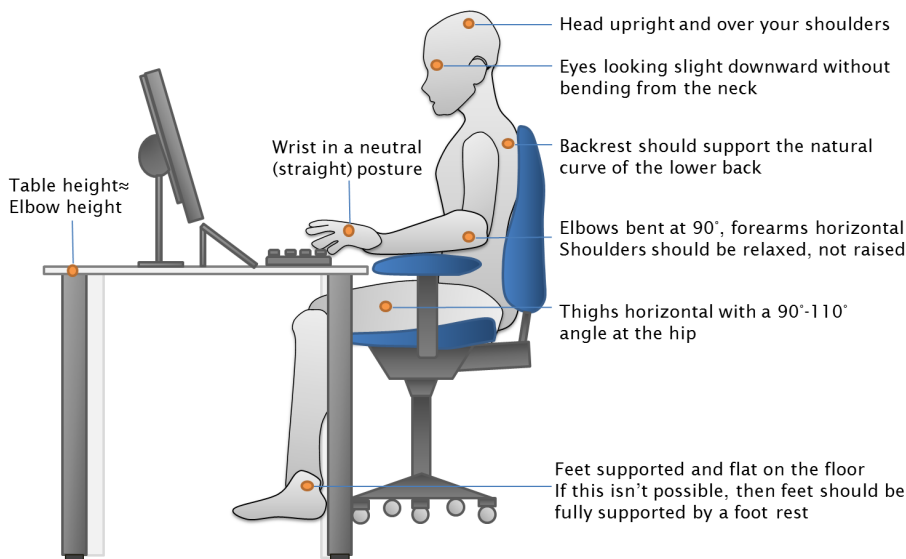
People across the world are working from home due to COVID-19, many for the first time. Unless you regularly work from home, chances are you aren't prepared. While it is possible to do everything from a laptop sitting on the sofa, or standing at the kitchen counter, or even from your bed, it is not possible to do so without ergonomic risk.

In addition to these challenges, many of us are trying to figure out how to maintain some sense of normality in the midst of uncertainty, while sharing home spaces with partners or the kids who are home from school. So, we've put together our top tips for a temporary work at home situation in this edition of Work-Able News.



This issue of Work-Able News is dedicated to offering you quick, simple and effective solutions for living and working well from home.

Laptop Ergonomics at Home



Working at home often means using a laptop, which by itself poses many ergonomic risks. If the laptop keyboard is set to an optimal height, you will be hunched over. If the laptop screen is set to a comfortable height, your arms will be lifted way up. This looks nothing like the ideal posture to the left! Most people have a hard time getting their sitting position right, so this is what we will focus on here.

One of the most important things you can do is to use an external keyboard and mouse. This will allow you to position the arms in the best way possible, to sit upright with the shoulders squared, keeping the spine neutral (not hunched over). The second benefit to this is having the ability to raise your laptop, either with a stand or even just on top of some books. This accomplishes two ergonomic goals; your eyes will no longer be too close to the screen and your neck won't have to remain tilted down.

Most people don't have a height-adjustable keyboard tray at home – so, start by adjusting your chair height to bring your elbow level with the work surface. This could be done using a cushion on the seat if needed. If your feet are not flat on the floor, find something to put under them – a small stool, a box, etc. – to keep them supported. For a chair without lumbar support, or even if it's just too large, use a portable back support, a pillow, or a rolled up towel to take the load off and keep your spine more neutral.

A great strategy for your physical health is to move around briefly every 1/2 hour!



A laptop set-up at a standard table
(Photo courtesy of: UC Santa Cruz)

Healthy Work from Home Strategies

As we enter this continually evolving, often strange new normal, taking care of our mental health is just as important as our physical health. Here are a few tips to help keep you on track:



1. Try to stick to your normal sleep schedule as much as possible. Keep the same bedtime and same awake time.
2. Develop and stick to a consistent work schedule for yourself, and for anyone else who is at home with you.
3. It is easy for work time to bleed into personal time. Try to set a dedicated space where you will work, separate from your relaxing spaces. Determine your hard stop time, then do your best to shut down. This helps set some boundaries between work life and home life.
4. If you usually take coffee or lunch at a certain time with a friend – keep up this visit time by calling, texting, FaceTime, or Skyping.
5. Keep physically active. 5-10 minutes of exercise here and there can make a huge difference. There are many great online exercise videos, and there is also nothing like a walk outside to clear your head.
6. Reduce stress hormones by adding humor to your day - reading cartoons or watching funny movies and comedy shows. Click here to watch our favorite work from home blooper: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh4f9AYRCZY>

Our team is actively developing in-depth work from home employee education programs, and virtual ergonomic assessment solutions specific to the current situation to help people transition to, and ultimately thrive in, their new work environments. We will be releasing these in the coming days and we encourage you to contact us with any of your ergonomic questions.

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