



# Creating a Healthy Home Office

## Developed by:

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## Working From Home

Many of us have worked from home at one time or another, but the current need to shelter in place has given it a completely new meaning. Not only are we spending more time than ever working from home (WFH), so is everyone else in our household. Kids are attempting to work remotely with school. Spouses are trying to find a quiet corner to work and have their own Zoom meetings. Some of us are using multiple devices such as desktops with multiple screens, or we are juggling between using a laptop and tablet device. In addition, some households have multiple generations living under one roof. Here, grandparents are trying to find a comfortable space to do their online shopping, catch up with friends on FaceTime, or participate in a Zoom book club.

## Ergonomic Impact

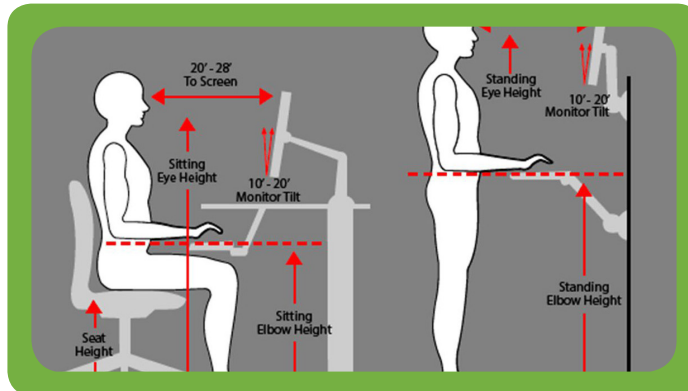
With all this abrupt change in our patterns of daily living, it can mean many of us are working in less than ideal ergonomic situations – typing on a laptop while sitting on the couch, on the bed, or on a hardwood dinette chair at the kitchen table. These less than perfect environments may result in a less than satisfactory work from home experience, and may affect your productivity and efficiency – both at work and at home.

These changes are not the best for your body. As a result, many of us may be experiencing increased stiffness, sore necks, backaches, headaches, and shoulder or wrist pain. To remedy and prevent these aches and pains, the key is to be aware of the ergonomics of your temporary workspace to help keep your body comfortable and prevent pain and stiffness.

# What You Can Do

The following suggestions will help you make the most out of working from home:

- **Maintain upright posture.** Be conscious of your posture while seated or standing.
- **Avoid hunching over.** While seated or standing, avoid hunching over the keyboard.
- **Find a natural working height.** You want your elbows to fall naturally with your desk height. Keeping elbows at a 90 degree angle allows for better wrist alignment and prevents carpal tunnel stress.
- **Keep your eyes level.** Your eyes should be level with the address bar on the web browser to keep your head in neutral alignment with your spine, avoiding excess neck flexion or tilting of your head backwards.



- **Utilize an office chair when possible.** Office chairs have adjustable options to optimize your back and neck comfort. If you don't have an office chair, putting a firm pillow or a chair cushion under your buttocks will optimize your hip and spine alignment. Also, don't hesitate to put a firm pillow along your back if the chair back is not comfortable. This will also promote alignment and comfort.
- **Keep your feet on the floor.** To reduce stress to your lumbar spine, your thighs should be parallel to the floor and your hips slightly higher than your knee. Modify your environment as needed using books or boxes to achieve this position.
- **Take rest breaks!** It is important to get up and move often throughout the day as your spine, neck, and legs need stretch breaks.
- **Focus on nutrition and hydration.** Instead of snacking/eating at your home workspace, get up and walk to the kitchen to make yourself lunch. Regularly refill your fluids, such as water, to stay hydrated. This gives you an opportunity to get up and move around and lets your eyes have a rest break from the computer screen. It will also keep your workspace clean and free from mishaps such as spilled liquids on your keyboard.
- **Take vision breaks!** In addition, your vision needs rest breaks to avoid headaches, blurred vision, or sore/tired eyes. There is a 20/20/20 rule that I like popularized by Dr. Jeff Anshell, a specialist in vision ergonomics:

**Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.**

