

Ergonomics at Home



Many of us are dealing with a new workspace, our homes. While we might not have everything we would have at work, there are steps we can take to protect our bodies from ergonomic issues like neck, back or wrist pain.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Your workspace might be a kitchen table or desk, so use a little creativity. Here are some ideals to strive for when creating a computer workstation:

- Assume a relaxed, tension-free posture in your neck and shoulders
- Place your elbows at a 90° angle
- Keep your wrists protected from sharp or hard edges, and in a neutral position
- Make sure the mouse is at the same height and distance from the screen as the keyboard
- Ensure adequate lower back support
- Keep your knees at a 90° angle
- Keep your hips at a 90° angle
- Position your feet flat on the floor or supported by a footrest
- Make sure the height of your work surface is appropriate
- Sit at the correct distance from the monitor: about 25"
- Keep computer monitor at, or slightly below, eye level

See what you have around your home to help you achieve this. Possibly prop your monitor up on some boxes to get it to the right height, or use boxes or tubs as a footrest, if needed. Perhaps place a towel under your wrists to protect from sharp edges.

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR EYES

Working from home, you will likely have many hours behind a computer screen. Just as your body needs rest, so do your eyes. The Mayo Clinic recommends the following tips to help prevent eyestrain:

- Remember to blink – it will create tears to moisten your eyes and can keep them fresh
- Look away from your screen often – follow the “20-20-20 rule”: Every 20 minutes, look at something about 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds
- Make sure you have good lighting and avoid glares on your screen – perhaps position a desk lamp nearby and avoid putting screens directly in front of a window or white wall
- Adjust the font size on your computer to make it easy to read



Proud Member

CREATE A REGULAR SCHEDULE

While what is “regular” might be different depending on your situation – for example if you have kids at home with you – but keeping to a routine will be helpful. When the lines between work and home are blurred, you might have a tendency to work longer hours. Here are some tips to give your body the rest it needs:

- Remember to eat regular meals and drink lots of water – it’s a good way to keep your body and brain fueled, and a chance to step away from work for a bit
- Stretch your arms, legs, neck and back on a regular basis – you might want to create “meetings” that pop up in your email to remind you to stretch
- Get up and go for a walk – whether it’s walking around home or a quick walk outside, keeping your body moving can help with blood flow and prevent strain
- Create a stopping point for your day – do the work you can in the schedule you create, but set an endpoint so you can get good sleep and some downtime for your next day

If you find you are experiencing pain while working, report it to your supervisor right away. Pain should never be part of the job. Asking others for help can provide solutions you may not have thought of. Consider taking a photo of yourself in your workstation and sending it to your safety contact for review. They can likely provide alternative ideas and perhaps specific stretches to help with your issues. We are all in this together, so use all the resources you have available to keep your body healthy.

