

Ergonomics for Homeworkers

From New Zealand Health Group

There are a few extra challenges when working from home to ensure you have good posture. You will need to improvise to an extent, but the tips below will help optimise comfort in your temporary work environment. The key when working from home is to move regularly!



Chair

You may not have an adjustable chair at home. If you are using a dining room chair, ensure it is comfortable and put a cushion in the lumbar curve of your back if needed.

If you have an office chair, ensure the curve in the backrest fits into the curve in the lower part of your back. This allows your back to be supported in a good posture while sitting. If the seat pan (the part you sit on) tilts, you may find that tilting it forwards is slightly more comfortable.

The height of your chair where possible should enable you to sit with your elbows in line with, or slightly higher than the top of the desk, while your arms are relaxed by the side of your body. If this is not the case, then play around with a cushion on the base of your chair, to ensure you are at the correct height when working at the table or desk.

When sitting at a comfortable height, your feet should be flat on the floor or footrest and your hips should be positioned slightly higher than your knees. If this is not the case, you may need a footrest/ small box to place your feet on.

If your chair has armrests, you may find the armrests prevent you from sitting close enough to the keyboard. If this is the case, you should either change the chair for one that has no armrests, so that you can reach the keyboard without stretching your upper arms forwards.





Screen

If you are working from a laptop, a separate keyboard and mouse is preferred to optimise your posture. We realise this is not always possible so around if anyone has a spare for you to borrow for the lockdown duration.

Position the laptop on a monitor stand / box / stack of books / even pots and pans (be creative!) so the top of the screen is approximately at eye level.

The screen should be about 600-800mm away from you (approximately an arm's length). It should also be directly in front of you.

Position the screen so that it is not facing a light source (e.g. window), and so that light from behind does not reflect directly off the screen; it is best to position the screen to a 90° window.

If you have dual screens at home, use with the following guidance:

- Minimise the gap between screens
- Screens should be wrapped around the user like a semi-circle, so the distance between the user and the screen is relatively constant
- The distance of the screens from the person and the height of the screens should be the same as for one screen (i.e. screens both at eye level, positioned approximately an arm's length away from the user)
- Consider adjusting the font size of the text to ensure both screens display information consistently

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Other Tips

It is OK to improvise when working from home. Just don't stay in one position for too long. Ensure you move between sitting & standing on a regular half-hourly basis to prevent and manage any discomfort

Position other frequently used items (e.g. telephone) within easy reach, so you do not have to stretch or twist to reach them.

Keep your distance from others

Wipe down any borrowed equipment like keyboards and mice

A micropause is a short period of relaxation every few minutes

- Micropause regularly during the day
- They are short, frequent breaks rather than long, occasional breaks
- They can help prevent fatigue & discomfort
- They are included in the natural work routine

How to micropause

1. Stretch both your arms out in front of you
2. Rest your hands on the desk, your lap or drop them down by your side
3. Drop your shoulders and let your arms go floppy
4. Take a deep breath in (through your nose, and out through your mouth)
5. Jiggle your arms or have a stretch, and resume work after a few seconds.

Do your stretches!

