

Ergonomics

Best Practices

Working from home has become the norm for many of us.

Our living rooms and dining tables have transformed into offices as we settle into this new form of reality. We may not realize it, but day after day this is affecting our bodies since our couches and chairs have not been designed to encourage good

posture and boost productivity. For hours on end, we sit and stare at our screens, unconsciously putting stress and strain on our bones and muscles.

To optimize your workflow and reduce the strain put on your body, here are some best practices we have gathered to help you be at your best while working from home:

1. Designate A Work Area

- One of the most important things to identify is your workstation. Many of us may decide to work on the couch one day and switch to the kitchen table, the next. It's important to decide which area of the house will be reserved for work, so you can give your body consistency.
- This is also crucial to encourage a healthy work-life balance. With the lines clearly drawn, one part of your life will not blur into another. With this separation in place, you will also be able to associate one area of the house with productivity and another with relaxation.

2. Optimize Your Workstation

Now that you have chosen your workstation, take into consideration the chair, desk, and computer you are using:

- Sit on a chair which is going to support your back. If this is not available, consider placing a pillow behind your lower back so you can reduce any sense of strain.
- Work on a table which is level with your forearms, allowing your arms to rest comfortably at 90-degree angles. If the table you have is too high, sit on a pillow to allow your forearms to be in line with the table to reduce any pressure. Placing a small towel underneath your arms can also be a great solution to alleviate any strain.
- Make sure your computer is an arm's length away and that your eyes are level with the top of your screen. Place a stack of books underneath your laptop or use a stand to reduce any strain on your eyes.

- > If you are accustomed to using two screens when you work, and are confined to your laptop now, consider purchasing a second monitor or ask your organization for compensation. Having two screens side by side can boost your productivity and help you finish tasks faster. If you are using two screens now, make sure they are side by side and that the one you use less frequently is placed on your right.

3. Take Breaks and Stretch

- It's so easy to get consumed in a task and forget to take a break. This is not good for your eyes as you have been staring at a screen for hours on end. Make a note to look away from your screen every twenty minutes for at least twenty seconds.
- Move every 30 minutes. It's not good to stay in the same position for too long, so make sure to move around occasionally, to avoid unnecessary strain.
 - > One great option is to convert your kitchen counter to a standing desk.
- Stretch! To alleviate strain, it's important to stretch your neck, arms, back, and legs throughout the day. Make sure to hold each stretch for at least 15 seconds.

4. Be Mindful of Time

- Before COVID-19, many of us were used to 9-5 jobs. Now that we are at home, you might be finding you are working longer hours as there is no train, subway, or bus to catch. As we are already sitting for hours on end working, it's important you avoid
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getting consumed by work every night as this will put immense pressure on your body.

- In BBC's article, [How to work from home-comfortably](#), Dr. Susan Hallbeck, the president of Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, states "microtraumas" are what we should be mindful of. This includes the pressure we unconsciously put on various joints and muscles, that can lead to long-term issues such as carpal tunnel syndrome or back injuries.

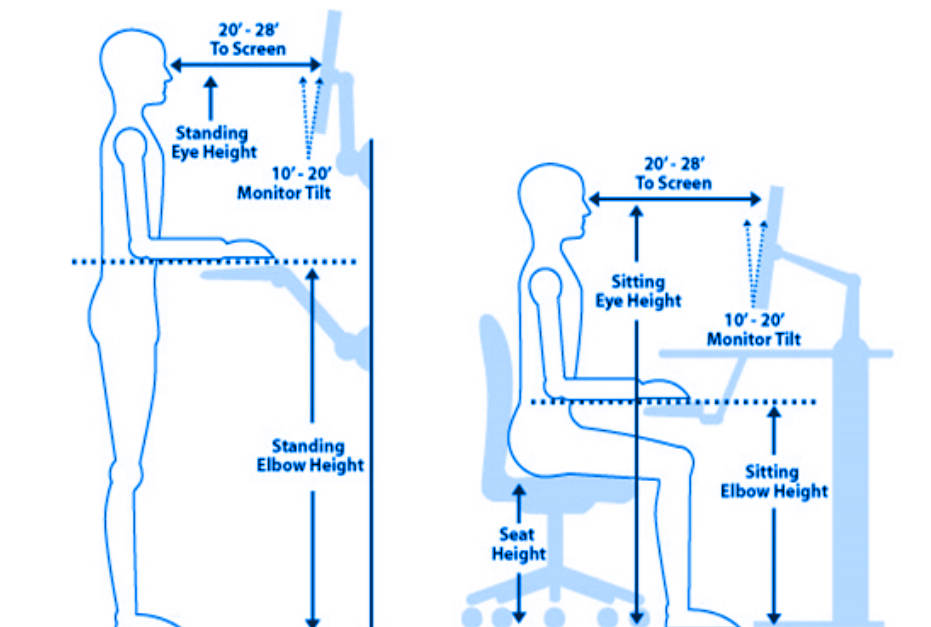
5. Check in With Your Body

- Last but certainly not least, take the time to check-in with yourself. Throughout the day, take a moment to focus on your body. If you discover any areas of strain, use the stretching exercises presented above, move around, or take a break. Most importantly,

make it count so you are physically and mentally rejuvenated!

It's so important we consider ergonomics in our present situation, as we have no idea what the future will hold. By staying safe and protecting our bodies, we can increase productivity while decreasing strain.

To learn more, check out [this piece](#) by the National Safety Council on ergonomics and overexertion and [this piece](#) by EHS Today on the business value of ergonomics.



RESOURCES

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