A Guided Approach to Setting up Your Workstation at Home
Telecommuting and the New Normal

Due to COVID-19 we have moved to a reality where most people are telecommuting from their homes and social distancing measures require a new normal.

This requires the challenge of setting up an at home workstation to be as ergonomically friendly as possible.

Sometimes space within the home is limited and office space may double as a dining space, kitchen counter or general use area.

Other times, a desk and chair are present, but may not have the adjustability needed to provide a suitable long-term work environment.

When setting up the home work environment remember to implement ergonomics basics.
Most Important Elements of an Office Setup

1. Feet supported by the floor or a footrest
2. Hips at or slightly above knees
   • 90-120° angle between thighs and torso
3. Keyboard at or slightly below elbow height
   • 90-120° elbow angle with elbows below shoulders
4. Top of the monitor at or slightly below seated eye height
   • Large monitors – At eye height
   • Small monitors and laptop monitors – Slightly below eye height
Chair

The intent of this resource is to provide guidance for how to adjust your typical at-home chair to a more ergonomically sound set up that is as close to your work chairs as possible, and that is feasible.

Adjusting a chair is key to your comfort, especially when working from home. The user should be able to sit with their feet flat on the floor or a footrest with their knee, and hips at 90 degrees.

Your back should be supported, and there should be approximately 3 finger widths between end of the seat and the back of the knee.
Have an Adjustable Chair?

1. Chair Height
   ○ Raise/lower the chair until your hips are slightly higher (0-3”) than your knees

2. Seat Pan
   ○ Create a 2-3” (3 fingers width) space between the seat pan and the back of the calf

3. Backrest
   ○ If you can, tilt backrest to an angle that supports the back while sitting upright with your back at an angle between 90 - 120 degrees to your thighs
   ○ The sharpest part of the curve should contact your back at approximately the height of the tops of your hip bones (iliac crests)

4. Arm Rests
   ○ Adjust the armrests to support the arms and take pressure off the neck/shoulder area without causing you to elevate (shrug) your shoulders
   ○ If your armrests can be positioned closer/farther from the body, adjust them so they are under your elbows when you are seated
Setting Up a Non-Adjustable Chair

1. Need to raise your seat height?
   - Use pillows, a towel or cushion to raise your seated elbow height to your tabletop level to achieve neutral arm position. This should also reduce the pressure on your hips and lower back
   - Hips slightly above knees

2. Need to support your feet?
   - Utilize a step stool or book to bring your feet up to create the proper hip angle and still achieve the “feet flat” position

3. Seat Depth and Back Support
   - 2-3” (3 finger widths) between the back of your legs and the seat pan
   - A rolled up towel can decrease your seat pan depth, and provide additional lumbar support

1. Raise seat height with a pillow
2. Use a step stool for “feet flat”
3. Use a towel for lumbar support
Workstation

Try to duplicate your home office set up similarly to your work office set up; as close as possible and feasible. You should be able to sit comfortably, having your keyboard and mouse at/near your elbow height, and the top of the monitor/ laptop be close to eye level.
Setting Up Your Workstation Examples (Seated)
Setting Up Your Workstation (Standing)

Tired of Sitting?
Find something in your home that is at/near elbow height such as an ironing board, counter, dresser or even a bookshelf so you can work for short periods of times while standing.
Laptops

Laptop computers are lightweight, portable and convenient. Unfortunately, the laptop’s compact design, with an attached screen and keyboard, forces laptop users into awkward postures. When the screen is at the right height, the keyboard position is too high; when the keyboard is at the right height, the screen is too low. This creates an ongoing trade-off between poor neck/head and hand/wrist postures.
Setting up your Laptop

Use a laptop stand if you don’t use an external monitor. Attach an external keyboard and mouse at or slightly below elbow height. Use a footrest if needed.
Setting up your Laptop for standing

The same principles apply when standing.

Make sure to wear supportive footwear!
Microbreaks

What are Microbreaks:

Microbreaks are any form of activity that involves changing positions for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.

Why Microbreaks are Important:

‣ Can increase productivity
‣ Decrease risk of discomfort

Examples of Microbreaks:

‣ Standing up during phone calls
‣ Stand and gently stretch
‣ Drink more water
‣ Exercise

Additional Resources For Microbreaks

Stand Up! App
Egg Timer
When using digital screen devices, the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends the 20-20-20 rule to allow the eyes to rest:

- Every 20 minutes on the device, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

- Avoid using digital screens outside or in brightly lit areas as the glare on the screen can create digital eye strain.

Staring at any device for too long will prevent the blink response which is designed to keep the eye moist.
Eye Strain

What is Digital Eye Strain:

Vague term referring to eye strain experienced after long hours of screen time.

Glare, improper viewing distances, uncorrected vision problems, low blink rates and no breaks from working can all attribute to eye strain.

Symptoms Include:

- Watery, itchy or dry eyes
- Headaches
- Sore, tired or burning eyes
- Blurred or double vision

Try f.lux software on your computer to help keep your eyes relaxed throughout the day.

http://justgetflux.com
Wrist Rests

No wrist rest

DIY Shirt/Towel/Sock

DIY Folded towel
DIY Hacks

Use items you already have available at home such as books, boxes, pillows, cushions or towels to help optimize set up.
Resources

- Audio version of this presentation: https://youtu.be/mJxEgQnTdfc
- Keep your eyes in shape with the 20-20-20 rule https://www.montclair.edu/university-health-center/2019/03/14/give-your-eyes-a-break/
- F.lux software to automatically adjust screen brightness and warmth throughout the day https://justgetflux.com/
- Stand Up! App to remind you to take microbreaks https://www.raisedsquare.com/standup/
- An online eggtimer to set custom microbreak reminder times. https://e.ggtimer.com/
- How to use a laptop stand to raise your laptop monitor up to a good height http://ergonomicstrends.com/ergonomic-benefits-of-laptop-stands/
- Berkeley Laboratory Ergonomics in the Home Office https://ergo.lbl.gov/ergo-resources/home-office