

Working from home? 6 tips for setting up your workstation

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We asked our WSPS employees what tips and guidance they would like to offer employers during these challenging times. This article is part of our “From Our People to Yours” series.

Many of us have recently received the direction to work from home. In some cases, the news was a simple “grab and go” situation, grabbing your laptop and heading home. Some people may be lucky enough to have equipment that can help with a temporary home office set-up, such as a mouse, external keyboard, or monitor. Either way, how can we get comfortable using everyday household objects and basic ergonomic principles? Although the couch may be tempting, try these recommendations instead to set up your temporary home workspace:



1. Select a chair that will provide an appropriate amount of support throughout the day. If you're stuck with a hard kitchen chair, try sitting on a pillow or cushion for comfort and place a rolled-up towel behind your lower back for lumbar support.
2. Be sure your thighs are parallel with the ground while seated; this may require a footstool so your legs aren't hanging. A yoga block or some large books could be used if a footstool is not available.
3. Maintain a neutral wrist posture by choosing a work surface that is not too tall or too short. Ideally, you want to keep your wrists straight while typing and using your mouse. Avoid resting your wrists on the edge of the surface, as this can create discomfort in the forearms and hands. If your chair has arms, place your keyboard and mouse at the edge of the work surface so you can rest your forearms on the chair arms.
4. If you're using a laptop rather than a desktop computer, maintain a neutral neck posture by tilting the monitor upward. This provides a better angle to view the screen and reduces neck flexion.
5. Investing in a standard keyboard and mouse can really help reduce negative postures associated with long-term laptop use. Just plug the tools into your laptop and raise the laptop so the screen is in line with your line of sight.
6. Don't feel restricted to a single working position. The beauty of working from home is that you can access many different working areas, such as sitting on a recliner with a tray, or standing at your countertop. Frequently changing positions throughout the day is a great way to relax tense muscles, keep your blood flowing and give your body a break.

Resources

- Checklist: Home Office Workstation Set-Up (PDF)
- Quick Steps: Setting Up Your Temporary Laptop Workstation (PDF)

For more checklists and tips for working at your home office, check out our list of resources at www.wsps.ca, or contact your local account manager and ergonomist.

Sarah Hobbs, Laura Dwyer and Ayden Robertson are WSPS ergonomists who, for the moment, are also working from home.