

Working from home - Tips for setting up your workstation and workspace

With the Coronavirus situation affecting us all, at present, many of us are restricted to working from home.

This prompted me to put together this article, especially after receiving a message from my brother informing me that he had back pain and a trapped nerve from just a few days of working from home using his laptop.

The article contains valuable advice and tips for setting up a better working situation to help reduce unnecessary musculoskeletal pain and repetitive strain injuries associated with poor posture and sustained activities: -

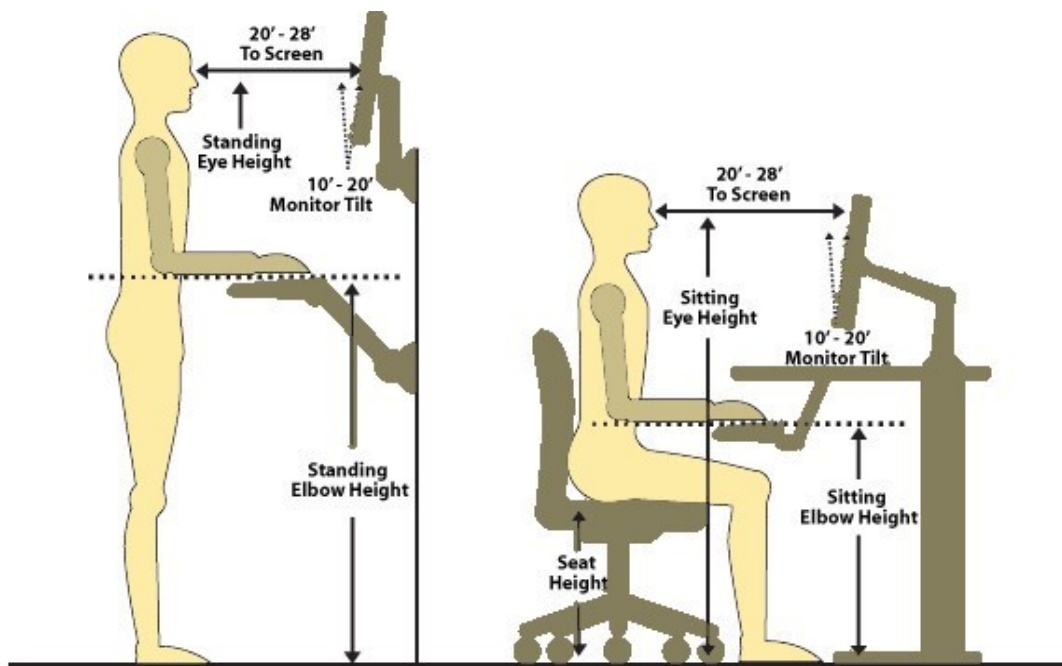
- Make sure you set up an area that is yours

This ensures you have a permanent set up and means you don't have to keep setting up and clearing away your computer, folders and files etc. on a regular basis. If you have decided to work from the dining table for instance you may find you need this space back in the evening or at meal times!

- Choose somewhere quiet with a bit of space if possible where you can keep things set up more permanently, this will ensure you work much more efficiently and more relaxed.
- You need to be comfortable with good posture

In an Ideal situation, we all would have a good office chair and desk that is fit for purpose and in the work place this should be the case, unfortunately at home we won't necessarily have this luxury.

Below is an example of a good work station set up and if you have a decent office chair and desk or table that you can set up close to this, that's great - if on the other hand you only have an ordinary dining chair and a normal table or worktop area to work from at home, I will show you how to create a similar set up.



An ordinary dining chair or similar can be easily modified to suit you and create a set up similar to that above.

The height can be easily adjusted by adding a cushion or two to obtain a 90° angle at the hips and the knees. With an office chair, the height can usually be adjusted with a lever.

To obtain some support in the lumbar region, there are various lumbar rolls and supports on the market and these can be easily obtained via the internet. The examples below have adjustable straps to attach them to your chair.

The lumbar roll/cushions costs around £10 and the mesh supports can be found on the internet for less than £4. Both support your spine and help you create the correct sitting posture. Having said that, a rolled towel placed in the small of your back will give you similar results and you can experiment with the position and size of the roll to get it just right for you.



Lumbar roll/cushion



Mesh Back support



Rolled Towel

So, now you have got your seating sorted, the height of your computer and screen needs to be set up correctly.

If using a lap top, do not be tempted to have it on your knee – even short periods in this position will quickly build up stress in the neck, shoulders and your lower spine. Laptops are a little more problematic to get the set up right than a PC with a separate monitor. If using a laptop, have it on a table and adjust the height with a support/strong box, pile of books etc. so that your elbows are approx. at 90° when your fingers are on the keyboard (see diagram).

This of course causes a compromise with the height of the screen as the laptop screen is fixed to the keyboard. It is therefore best to look down using mainly your eyes with only a minimum downward tilt of the head to help avoid stress building in the neck and trapezius region.

With a PC and separate monitor, the keyboard can be set up with the elbow at 90° and the monitor height can be adjusted accordingly with a support or strong box etc. to raise it and obtain eye level with the top of the screen.

By setting up your workstation as close as possible to the diagram, you will ensure that you keep any stresses and potential postural problems to a minimum.

I have added a few stretches that should be performed gently and regularly to keep the back, neck and shoulders relaxed & supple. Perform 10 of each 2 or 3 x a day for the back stretches & 5 of each for the neck stretches.



Gently draw each knee towards chest



Gently lower knees to each side



Gentle arch backs



shoulder rolls forwards & backwards



Slow, gentle neck stretches all directions

Most importantly though, we are machines that are meant to move, the body hates static postures and repetitive activities. In order to avoid the accumulated stresses - get up and move regularly, at least a few minutes every hour, make a cup of tea, have a little walk around the house or garden or get up and do a few stretches regularly.

I hope you find this information & advice useful & that it helps you while working from home. Just one Final word to everyone reading this, please make sure you keep yourselves safe through these testing and troubled times.