



MANY of us are currently working from home during the conditional movement control order.

While it is an excellent precaution to avoid catching the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 (not to mention other viruses and bacteria), you might find that your makeshift home "office" is causing you pain in your neck, shoulders and back.

Working for extended periods of time at your dining or coffee table is not great for your body and overall health.

Without those adjustable office chairs, you have to be extra conscious of your posture and routine if you want to combat the stress and strain that come from sitting in a compromised position all day long.

Fortunately, there are cheap and creative ways to make your work-from-home set-up more ergonomic.

Stay comfortable and avoid back pain while you work remotely for the foreseeable future with these tips.

Elevate your workstation

At work, your desktop or laptop is at a work station with an adjustable chair.

But at home, working for 40-plus hours a week at your dining table can lead to back, shoulder and neck strain.

Laptops are never good ergonomically as the monitor is usually too low.

Ideally, the top of your monitor should be just below your eye level, so that you don't have to strain your neck while reading.

If you're working on a reading-intensive task, prop your laptop up on objects (like a stack of books or shoeboxes) so that it's at your eye level.

You can also invest in an external monitor or a laptop stand.

When you need to type, do lower your laptop to a level that allows your arms to be comfortably bent at 90° angles while doing so.

WFH without pain

Here are six tips to help avoid the pain that can come from a makeshift home office during this work-from-home (WFH) period.



While it may be more comfortable to work on your couch, it can eventually lead to muscle numbness and discomfort. — Filepic

Work at the appropriate height

The height of your workstation at home should be one that naturally allows your elbows to be at the same level as the table, desk or counter.

This will promote better wrist alignment and help avoid stiffness and stress on the carpal tunnel.

If compulsory working from home stretches on (as appears to be happening), you might want to invest in an appropriate office chair for your home workstation.

You should look for chairs that have adjustable height and back rests, as well as arm rests and good lumbar support.

A wheeled chair will allow you to easily adjust your distance from the computer and move it around

if necessary. The features of a good office chair will save you from much lumbar and neck discomfort, and is worth the investment.

Elevate your feet

Supporting your feet on an elevated surface or stretching your legs creates better blood circulation as you work throughout the day.

Ideally, your hips and knees should form 90° angles when you sit in your chair.

Place your feet on a few books or shoeboxes under your desk, so that your thighs are parallel to the floor and your hips slightly higher than your knees.

This will reduce stress on your lumbar spine.

When you start feeling stiff, move your feet back and forth.

Use the 20/20/20 rule

This rule states that for every 20 minutes spent looking at your computer screen, take 20 seconds to look at something else that is at least 20 feet (6m) away.

This will give your eye muscles a break and reduce eye strain.

Vary your position

It's crucial to vary your posture throughout the day as sitting in the same position all day long is the quickest way to getting back, neck and shoulder pain.

For some variety, move to different places around the house throughout the day.

Make one spot your main workstation, but also move to a place where you can stand to work, change tables or rooms, or sit on your couch for short periods.

But do not turn your couch into your main workstation!

As tempting as it sounds, the couch is not an optimal place to work at your computer for the entire day.

While it may be comfortable, having your legs or whole body in a horizontal or diagonal position can lead to muscle numbness and discomfort.

Instead, you can make your main workstation more comfortable in several ways.

Placing a thin pillow or cushion on your seat can make a regular chair much more comfortable.

Draping a soft fleece blanket over the back of your chair is also a small thing that can make your chair feel plush.

To reduce lower back pain, add a rolled towel between your chair and lower back for lumbar support.

Take regular breaks

Because we don't have an official lunch hour while working from home, it's easy to snack on small things while working throughout the day instead of eating a proper lunch.

Cooking a meal and staying hydrated gives you the opportunity to stand up and allow your eyes to rest from the glare of the computer screen.

Set boundaries so as not to be tempted to work through the night by sticking to your regular work hours or usual number of hours at work.

Most people take breaks to walk around when they're in the office, but when you're at home, there may be a tendency to forget to do this and keep going without enough breaks.

Stay active

Set a timer to go off every hour to remind yourself to take a break for three to five minutes.

Walk around, do some basic stretches or take the chance to finish some quick chores like washing the dishes from lunch or folding the laundry.

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