

# Office Ergonomics: Working from Home

## ✓ Choose an area of your home that allows productive work

Consider your comfort and the work you regularly complete when choosing a location. The work surface should be close to your elbow height with elbows bent 90-degrees. This allows typing, mousing, and writing with less contact stress on the edge of the work surface. A large wide workspace allows placement of all necessary equipment and documents, which improves productivity.

## ✓ The Chair

Sit in a chair that is comfortable and adjustable. For short stints, a dining room chair will provide comfort, but the lack of padding and lumbar support can lead to discomfort over time.

## ✓ Put a pillow on your seat

Placing a thin pillow underneath your seat can go a long way to making an ordinary chair a lot more comfortable. If you don't have a pillow, you could also fold up a fluffy towel for the same effect. Draping a soft towel over the back of your chair is also a small thing that can make your chair feel plush.

## ✓ Add a rolled towel for lumbar support

If you struggle with lower back pain, lumbar support pillows that rest on the back of your pelvis have shown to increase comfort while seated. You do not need to buy a fancy pillow to accomplish this effect, try rolling a towel and placing it between your chair and lower back.

## ✓ Elevate your laptop

Laptops are never going to be ergonomically efficient because the monitor is either going to be too low or the keyboard is going to be too high.

Ideally, the top of your monitor should be just below eye level, so you do not have to strain your neck to read. If you are working on a reading-intensive task, prop your laptop up on objects (stack of books or shoeboxes) so it is at eye-level. Add an external keyboard and mouse, so you can put the laptop at comfortable monitor height, or an external monitor, so you can put the laptop at a comfortable height for typing. Typing should always be at a level that allows your arms to bend at 90-degree angles.

## ✓ Take breaks

Set a timer to go off every hour to take a break for three to five minutes. Get up and walk around, or do some quick stretches. Adding regular exercise, even if it is low-level activity, is very important to keep your body healthy and avoid back pain. If using a non-office-style chair or a laptop without external input devices, take breaks more frequently.

It is crucial that you vary your posture throughout the day, because sitting in the same position or chair all day can lead to back, neck and shoulder discomfort. For example, you might start your day at your kitchen table, then transition to a standing position or sit on a couch. However, avoid working on soft couches and chairs, as they do not support the body evenly during extended sitting.

✓ **Additional safety precautions**

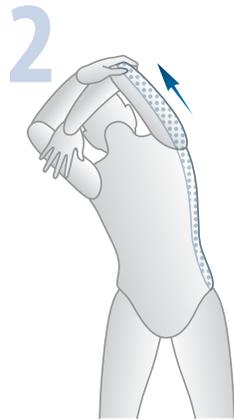
Be careful not to overload electrical outlets, to avoid fire risk. Be aware of extension/power cords and other tripping hazards.

## COMPUTER DESK STRETCHES (Approximately four minutes)

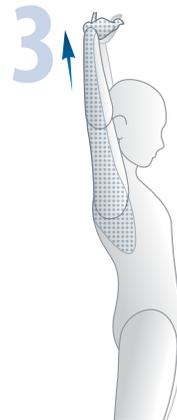
Sitting at a computer for long periods often causes neck and shoulder stiffness and, occasionally, lower back pain. Do these stretches every hour or so throughout the day, or whenever you feel stiff. Photocopy this and keep it in a drawer. Also, be sure to get up and walk around the office whenever you think of it. You'll feel better!



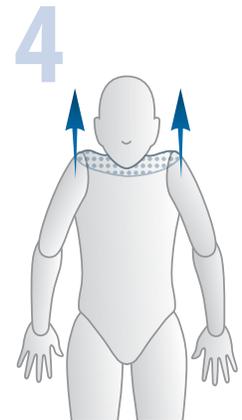
10-20 seconds, two times



8-10 seconds, each side



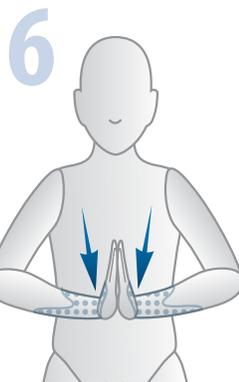
15-20 seconds



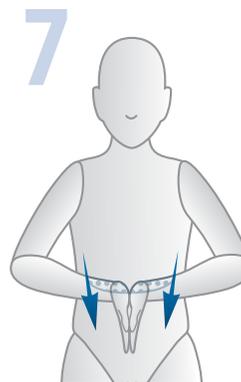
3-5 seconds, three times



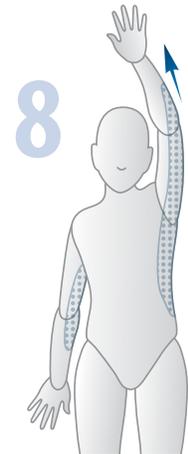
10-12 seconds, each arm



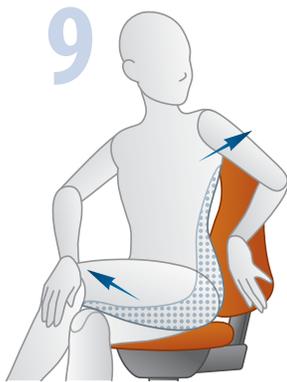
10 seconds



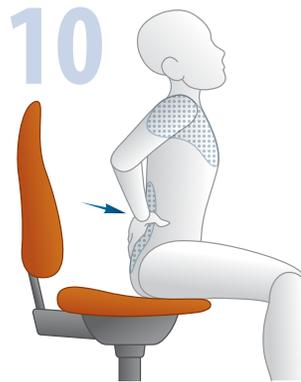
10 seconds



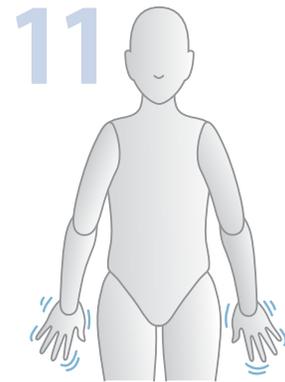
8-10 seconds, each side



8-10 seconds, each side



10-15 seconds, two times



Shake out hands, 8-10 seconds

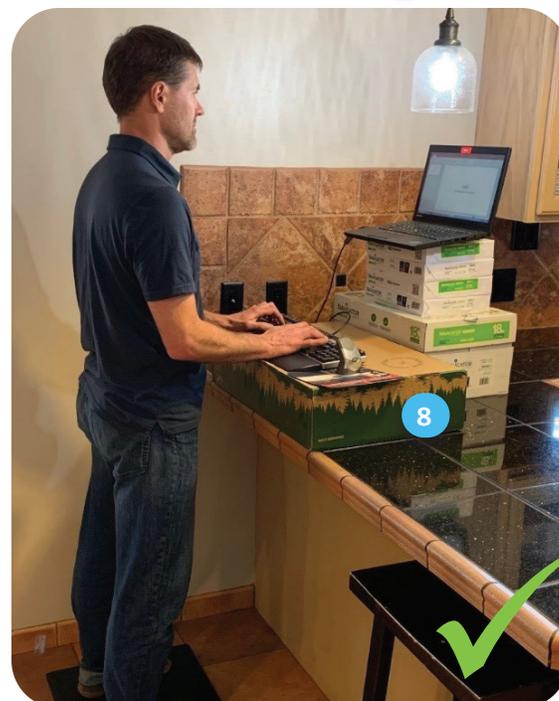
# Setting up your Home or Virtual Work Space

While working from home with improvised office furniture there is an increased risk for awkward postures that could lead to discomfort. These tips are provided to help you optimize your home or virtual work environment to avoid symptoms and maintain productivity.

- 1 Obtain an external monitor, keyboard, and mouse if possible
- 2 Find a work surface that is the right height for you (dining table, counter top, craft table, card table, etc.)
- 3 Choose the best chair available in your home or virtual office
- 4 Use a rolled-up towel or pillow to provide lumbar support if needed
- 5 Sit on a cushion to elevate yourself if the work surface is too high (use a footrest if needed)
- 6 Look for reams of copy paper, cardboard boxes, etc. to use as a footrest if you don't have one at home
- 7 Raise your monitor using books, boxes or reams of paper
- 8 Use cardboard boxes to raise a counter top work surface to the right height for standing work
- 9 Connect a personal computer monitor or TV screen to your laptop

## Additional Tips:

- Set working hours to establish a start and end time for your work day
- Take micro breaks, step outside for fresh air, or take a walk throughout the day
- Stand up and walk around during phone calls
- Avoid laying down or sitting cross legged on the floor, couch, or bed when working
- Alternate between sitting and standing postures (if possible)



# Transitioning to Virtual/Home Based Work

Aon offers some quick tips, considerations and ergonomics guidance to help make your transition comfortable and productive



## Turn commuting time into sleep time

Sleep in during the time you'd normally spend commuting in the morning! Many adults don't get enough sleep on a regular basis, so try to take advantage of the extra time to rest.



## Create a productive working space

Set up a designated work space in your home to create boundaries between your work and living spaces. Consider putting a door between you and your family, a place where you can have uninterrupted peace and quiet. Even if you live alone, setting up a designated workplace is recommended.



## Prioritize your mental health

A sense of uncertainty and a change of routine makes mental health a key area of focus. During times of stress, pay attention to your own needs and feelings:

- Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing
- Exercise regularly, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food



## Manage the flow of information

A near-constant stream of news reports and changing information can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed. Limit the amount of time you spend seeking information updates and practical guidance to a few specific times during the day.



## Stay connected and maintain your social networks

Even in situations of isolation, try as much as possible to keep your personal daily routines. If health authorities have recommended limiting your social contact, you can stay connected via e-mail, social media, video conference and telephone.



## Leverage technology and establish virtual ways to connect

Participate in video calls, interactive webinars, virtual team huddles and check-ins to stay in contact and support your colleagues and clients.