

Working from Home: Ergonomics for Your Body and Mind

As part of our COVID-19 pandemic response, many of us are working at home using our City-issued laptops. You likely don't have same adjustability in your body positions as you normally would at work. Here are some tips to help you set up your home and daily routine for a more comfortable and productive workday.



- **It might be called a laptop but take it off your lap or coffee table and get off that couch! This position requires you to slouch down and drop your head forward to see the screen.**
- Sit at desk or kitchen or dining room table.
- Make sure that you are using a chair with a seat back to support proper seating position. Keep your knees at a 90-degree angle
- You can place a pillow or rolled up towel behind your back for increased lumbar support.
- If you can't plant your feet flat on the ground after setting up your chair, shoe boxes and books make great footrests.
- The ideal working pattern suggests that for every 30 minutes of work, 20 minutes should be spent sitting in neutral postures 8 minutes should be spent standing in neutral postures, and 2 minutes should be spent moving and stretching.
- Use a higher surface like the kitchen island or counter when you want to stand and work.
- Set a reminder on your phone to take a break from the computer from time to time. Give your eyes a break by focusing on something different.



- If available, use a separate keyboard, mouse and monitor.
- Raise the laptop using a stack of paper, box or books so that the top of the screen is at eye level and lower if you have bifocals.
- Arms and shoulders - Your elbows should be at a 90-degree angle, tucked close to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position when typing.
- To avoid eye strain, make sure you work in a well-lit area but don't place your laptop in front of a bright window or in a position that will cause glare on the screen.

Distance your 'work life' from your 'home life'

- Create a workstation away from the space where you would usually relax and wind down. This way, your brain switches to 'work' mode when you are trying to be productive.
- Continue your morning work routine: changing into your work clothes, doing your morning self care routine, eat breakfast, then report to work.
- When you are done your work for the day, change back into your lounge clothes to help your mind and body adjust to 'relax' mode. It is important to take the time to let your mind and body rest at the end of the day.

Take breaks AWAY from your dedicated workspace

- Make sure you are taking the time to rest and reset during the workday.
- While today's accessibility to the internet can be a great tool, it can also be alarming. Instead of surfing the web for more news on COVID-19, go for a walk or take a stretch away from your workstation when you need to take a break.
- If you don't want to go outside, you can walk or run up the stairs a few times, walk a couple lengths of your house/ apartment.

Use your technology wisely

- Use a headset, earbuds or hands-free speaker mode when speaking on the phone to avoid awkward neck and upper extremity postures.
- If you are texting or emailing from your phone, use the dictation feature (speech to text) to reduce repetitive thumb movements and prolonged neck flexion.
- If you need a break from your work, connect with a friend or family member. Just because you might be in physical isolation, it does not mean that you have to be in social isolation.

Movement Strategies

- Not only is movement beneficial to your physical health, but it is also good for your mental health. Exercise releases happy hormones and decreases stress hormones.
- With the addition of stretches, it helps reset your improper or awkward postures while you work.
- You can do simple stretches at home. Visit ergocise.com/combinations.html for stretching routines.

Along with physical health, you need to take care of your mental health. These resources can help:

Homewood Health (EFAP) homeweb.ca, 1.800.663.1142

LifeSpeak: coh.lifespeak.com - Select "Forgot client password" for access to the self-help videos *

SPROUT hamilton.sproutatwork.com – register & connect with colleagues; improve your wellbeing *

*requires City of Hamilton email

For more information, contact your Health, Safety & Wellness Specialist