Working from Home - Ergonomics in a Home Environment

We have seen significant changes as our provincial health-care system responds to COVID-19, including establishing approved work from home arrangements. If required, telephone and/or in-home ergonomics assessments are available through your local Occupational Safety and Health Department.

Please review and follow these key ergonomic principles that will help you work from home in a safe and productive manner:

1. Select an appropriate work location

Try to choose a table or work surface that is 27”-29” high. Any higher, and you may find an increase in shoulder and neck discomfort that comes from working on a work surface that is too high. Select a location in your home where you can concentrate without too many distractions. If you have small children in your home, try to create a daily schedule for your children to follow that will allow you time to complete your work.

2. Select the best chair available

In an ideal world, this means a fully adjustable office chair that you can adjust to your stature and that allows you to vary your posture during the day. If you don’t own an adjustable office chair, take stock of the chairs in your home. Pick a chair that provides back support and allows you to sit upright (hip to back angle of 90-110 degrees) with your upper body weight supported on the backrest. Pick a chair that, when you are seated, places your seated elbow height as close to level with your work surface height as possible. If your work surface remains slightly higher than your seated elbow height, consider tilting your keyboard slightly (using the feet on the back of the keyboard) to promote straighter wrist posture. Keep in mind, that the less “ideal” your seating is, the more often you need to get up and move around.

3. Find a footrest (if needed)

Once you are seated, take a look at your thighs. They should be parallel with the floor, with your feet firmly planted. A stack of legal-sized copy paper, or a large flat book are options you can use while working at home if you do not have a footrest.

4. Ergonomic Tips for Laptop Use

This diagram shows you ergonomic tips when using your laptop:
Ergonomic Tips for Proper Laptop Use

1. Elevate laptop with an adjustable laptop stand, or stack of books, so top of screen is at eye level. Position laptop screen approximately arms length away.
2. Use an external keyboard and mouse and position them at elbow height on the same surface.
3. Adjust keyboard angle to promote straight wrist postures.
4. Maintain relaxed shoulders with elbows positioned below the shoulder joint.
5. Position the chair's lumbar support in the small of back.
6. Adjust seat height so knee angle is approximately 90°.
7. Ensure there is sufficient leg room under the work surface.
8. Place feet flat on the floor or on a foot rest.

TIPS FOR LAPTOP USE ON THE GO

✓ Bring an external mouse and keyboard to use when possible.
✓ Avoid prolonged use.

REMEMBER
TAKE BREAKS & STRETCH REGULARLY.

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5. Move around or create a standing workstation

In some home office arrangements, following ergonomic guidelines may not be possible. It is very important to ensure that you are getting up from your desk every 30-60 minutes to stretch and walk around. Try standing while on telephone conference calls. Another option is to place your laptop on a kitchen counter or on top of a filing cabinet to create a standing height workstation for short periods of time. You can even invert a baking pan or use your butcher block cutting board to raise the height of the counter slightly. The goal is to position the keyboard as close to standing elbow height as possible, but for short periods of 15-20 minutes, the height does not need to be perfect. Try to take mini stretch breaks whenever possible (Ideally – every 25 -30 minutes).

6. Protect your mental health

Working from home can feel isolating, especially if you are used to being in an office surrounded by your peers. Make a point of checking in with your colleagues by telephone. Get dressed and go out for a walk to get some fresh air every day.

https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/managestress.html

Above all, stay safe and stay healthy.

For more information check out these helpful links:

Ergonomics — Hazards of the Seated Posture

Stretching poster

Home set-up

This information follows guidelines established by Certified Canadian Professional Ergonomists

For the latest most up-to-date information visit:
https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/

Social Media
https://twitter.com/SharedHealthMB
https://www.facebook.com/sharedhealthmanitoba/
https://www.instagram.com/sharedhealthmb/