

If neither are available to you and your laptop is your only option – make sure to schedule regular breaks allowing you to get up and move around. Taking intermittent breaks will reduce the amount of time you are sitting in one position and assist with putting your body back into your neutral position.

Figure 1: Correct Sitting Posture

Pick a chair that is comfortable and supportive. It is not common to have a fully-adjustable office chair at home. It is important to select a chair in your home that can provide a sturdy base (unlike a couch or bed) while still being comfortable. The type of chair that you choose should depend on your height. While you may not have a chair that follows the exact guidelines placed by ergonomic experts, try to find one that promotes best practices:

- While seated, your feet should be placed flat on the floor or placed on a foot-rest—sturdy household items can be utilized if you don't have a traditional

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footrest on hand.

- Ensure your backrest provides lumbar support, and if the chair has armrests, they should gently support your forearms.

Here are some ways to adopt ergonomic ideals with items found in your home:

- Use a step stool, box, or another similar sturdy item such as a footrest if you are sitting at a chair that is higher up, like a bar stool.
- Place a pillow or folded up hand towel behind you for extra support.
- Use your table (if it is a proper height) as an armrest by pushing your computer farther back. Ensure that it is not far enough away that it causes you to reach.

Rotate between sitting and standing. The rotation between the two positions will help relieve stress and strain on your lower back and neck. There are ways to mimic traditional office equipment in your home. Using an *ironing board* or *countertop* as your desk can allow you to stand while still getting your work done. Another benefit of rotating between sitting and standing is that it promotes focus and productivity by removing the stagnancy that comes with sitting in the same spot for a full workday.

Things to Avoid While Working Remotely. There are a few simple tricks you can follow to avoid stress to your body, both physically and mentally. While working from home, do your best to avoid the following:

- ***Avoid the temptation of sitting in bed or on the couch.*** It may seem like the sofa is the best way to be comfortable, but it does not provide adequate support for your body.
- ***Avoid sitting with the back of your knees pressed against the edge of your chair.*** The pressure on the back of your knees over an extended period can decrease circulation and promote swelling.
- ***Avoid slouching.*** Paying attention to your posture is a simple way to alleviate stress on your body. Make it a habit to stretch and adjust your position at least once an hour.
- ***Avoid the feeling of isolation.*** Stay in contact with your coworkers. Use communication tools to maintain the daily relationships and conversations that you would typically have while in the office.

Behaviors to Adopt While Working Remotely. Prioritizing your mental health as you would your physical health is crucial for creating a positive work-from-home experience. Working remotely can make it challenging to stay engaged and cause people to focus on the uncertainty that the national pandemic has created for many of us. As the period of working remotely extends with no definite date of when it will conclude, the idea of “social distancing” can start to turn into a feeling of “social isolation.” Consider adopting some of the following tips and tricks to avoid this happening to you:

- ***Create and maintain a routine schedule.*** Sticking to a regular plan similar to one during an average workweek is important for various reasons. It will help this irregular work period feel more reasonable for you, and will also help when adjusting back to life in the office.
- ***Take breaks.*** It is essential to get fresh air, stretch your legs, and give your eyes a break from screens. Experts recommend taking short 1-2 minute breaks every 20 minutes to ease stress and promote productivity.
- ***Pay attention to your posture.*** Being mindful of maintaining an upright posture

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Ensure that you are adopting healthy habits and invest the time to create a sustainable home office that works for you—your health and happiness could depend on it.

For additional information on this topic, please contact your CIRMA Risk Management Consultant.

while working has benefits for your mental health along with reducing strain on your body. Sitting upright throughout the day can help you stay alert.

- **Separate home and work.** Set strict boundaries and restrict yourself from bringing your work into places of relaxation in your home, like the living room or bedroom. Once your work hours are over, close your computer and act as if you left your work at the office.
- **Stay connected.** Along with staying connected to friends and family, ensure that you are keeping up with your work relationships. Meeting and communication tools are useful in both professional and personal type meetups.

Conclusion

While the work-from-home order was put in place to keep everybody safe and healthy, it can be challenging on the body and mind. The feelings of uncertainty and isolation that come with the global pandemic can lead to unhealthy patterns – both physical and mental. While working remotely, challenge yourself to do all that you can to avoid these patterns. Pay attention to the habits that you are forming. Decide whether these habits are beneficial to your physical and mental health and if they are not, consider adjusting them in ways that make you feel more at ease. Try to use in-home alternatives to the traditional office equipment that is usually available to you to reduce physical strain on your body. Ensure that you are adopting healthy habits and invest the time to create a sustainable home office that works for you—your health and happiness could depend on it.

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Creating a Home Work Environment that Works for You: Simple adjustments that you can make to be more comfortable while working from home.

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