

# SETTING UP YOUR WORKSTATION AT HOME

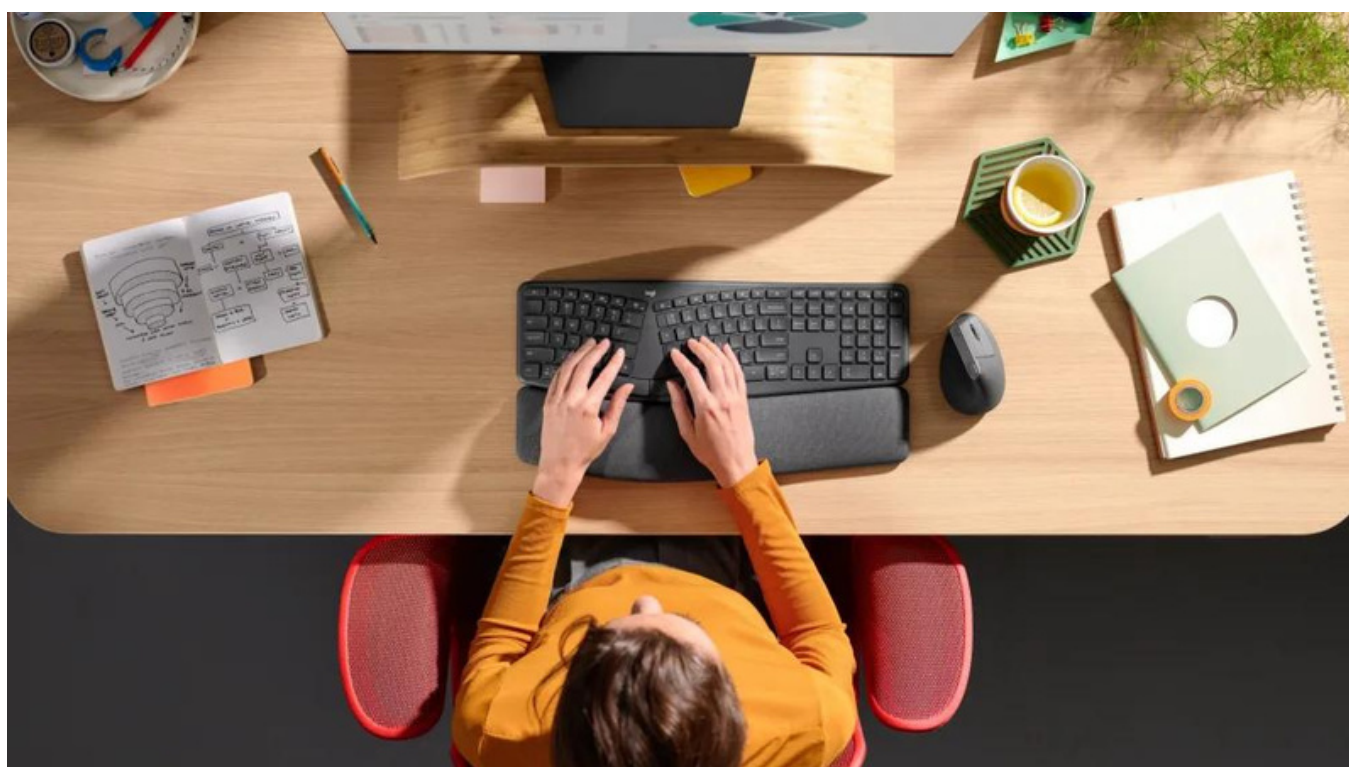
for Optimal Comfort and to  
Avoid Pain and Injuries.





## WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- The most common reasons for pain, discomfort or injuries when using a workstation and how to avoid them.
- The basic setup of a computer workstation.
- What basic ergonomic equipment is needed and why.
- How to set up and adjust your workstation at home.
- Tips for working from home to avoid injuries, fatigue, and burnout.



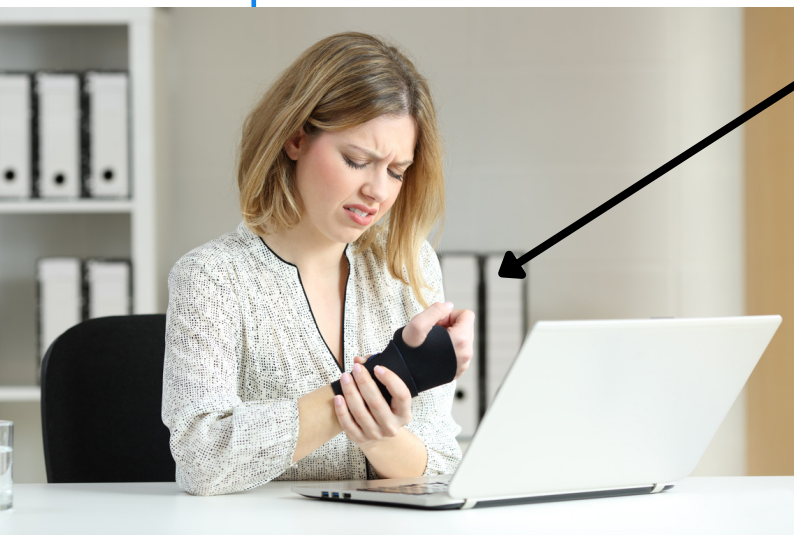
## COMMON PROBLEMS:

A workstation that's not set up the right way can cause musculoskeletal fatigue and injury as well as eye strain.



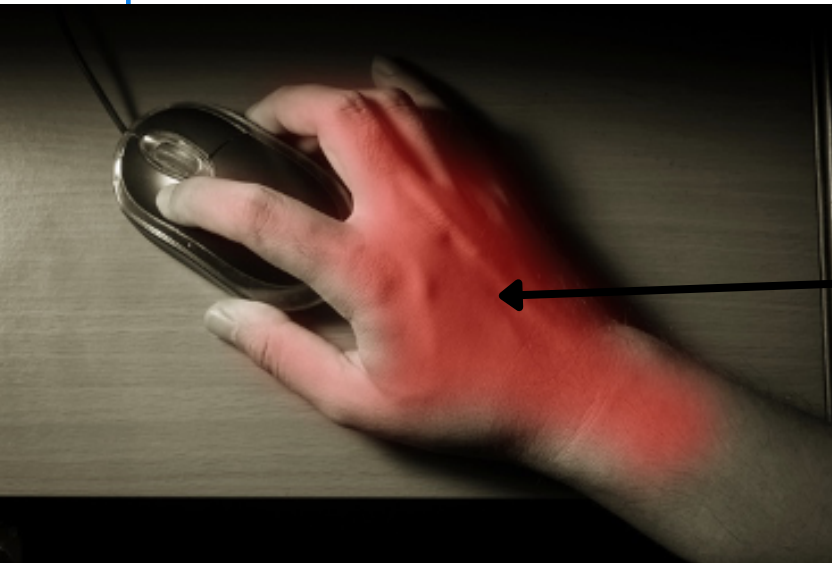
The most common problems are:

- Neck, shoulder and back pain from continuously looking down or hunching your shoulders.
- Nerve compressions like Carpal Tunnel Syndrome from repetitive typing and mouse use.
- Eye strain & headaches from looking at a screen for too long or having glare on your screen.
- Tendonitis (e.g. wrist or elbow) from repetitive typing and mouse use.
- Fatigue - both muscular ~~fatigue and mental~~ fatigue by not taking regular breaks.





## COMMON PROBLEMS:



If your mouse is too small, it can cause pain/tendonitis on the top of your hand.

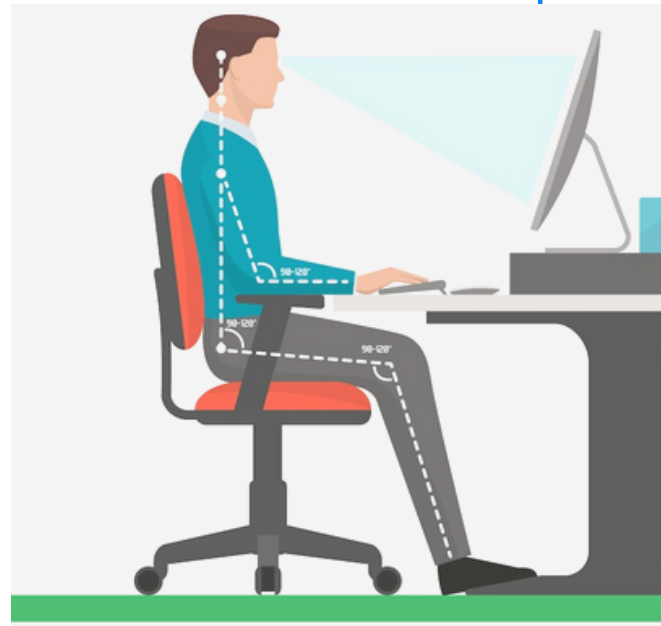


If your wrists aren't straight/neutral with your forearms parallel to your desk it can lead to wrist pain or a nerve compression injury like Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.



## THE BASIC SET UP OF A COMPUTER WORKSTATION:

Focus on setting up your workstation to fit your body rather than specific heights and measurements of your furniture.



**Set it up so that your workstation feels comfortable for you but make sure it's within the guidelines below:**

- Desks and chairs must be set up to a height that is suitable for long periods of work (dining tables and chairs are not typically suitable for working at for long periods of time).
- Chairs must be height adjustable and have adjustable lumbar support or a support cushion.
- Your feet should be supported and either flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- Your thighs should be parallel to the floor or slightly angled downward (aim for a 90-120° angle between your thighs and torso).
- Your forearms should be parallel to the floor or slightly below elbow height when your hands are on your keyboard (aim for a 90-120° elbow angle).
- The top of your screen/monitor(s) must be adjusted to be in line with your eyebrow height.

## BASIC ERGONOMIC EQUIPMENT:

### Your Work Surface

- Your Work Surface (desk or table) should be flat and large enough to fit all the items you need on top – especially if you're using multiple screens/monitors.
- If you have an 'L-shaped' desk sit at a straight edge, if there's enough room, instead of in the corner/apex of the desk.
- The desk should be at a height that allows plenty of room between the desk and the top of your thighs.
- Don't put anything under the desk/table. Make sure you have enough legroom to sit close to your desk/table so you can stretch your legs.
- Always keep your arms at your sides. Don't extend them, when using your keyboard.
- Your wrists should be straight/neutral, not bent up or down when typing on your keyboard.
- Everything should be located directly in front of you. You shouldn't be twisting to see your screen.
- Smaller and less used screens/monitors like a laptop can be placed to the side.



## BASIC ERGONOMIC EQUIPMENT:

### Your Chair

- It must have good lumbar support with adjustable position/height of the lumbar support. If it doesn't, then get an attachable lumbar support/lumbar roll to add to the chair.
- The height of the chair should be adjustable so that you can sit with your forearms parallel to the floor (or slightly sloped down) when hands are on your keyboard.
- It should have a soft seat with a "waterfall edge" not a sharp edge.
- There should be a space about 3 finger widths between the end of the seat and the back of the knee or an adjustable seat pan to allow for this.
- If the chair has armrests, make sure they're height adjustable and/or removable so that they're not too high causing you to hunch your shoulders.



## BASIC ERGONOMIC EQUIPMENT:

### Your Chair



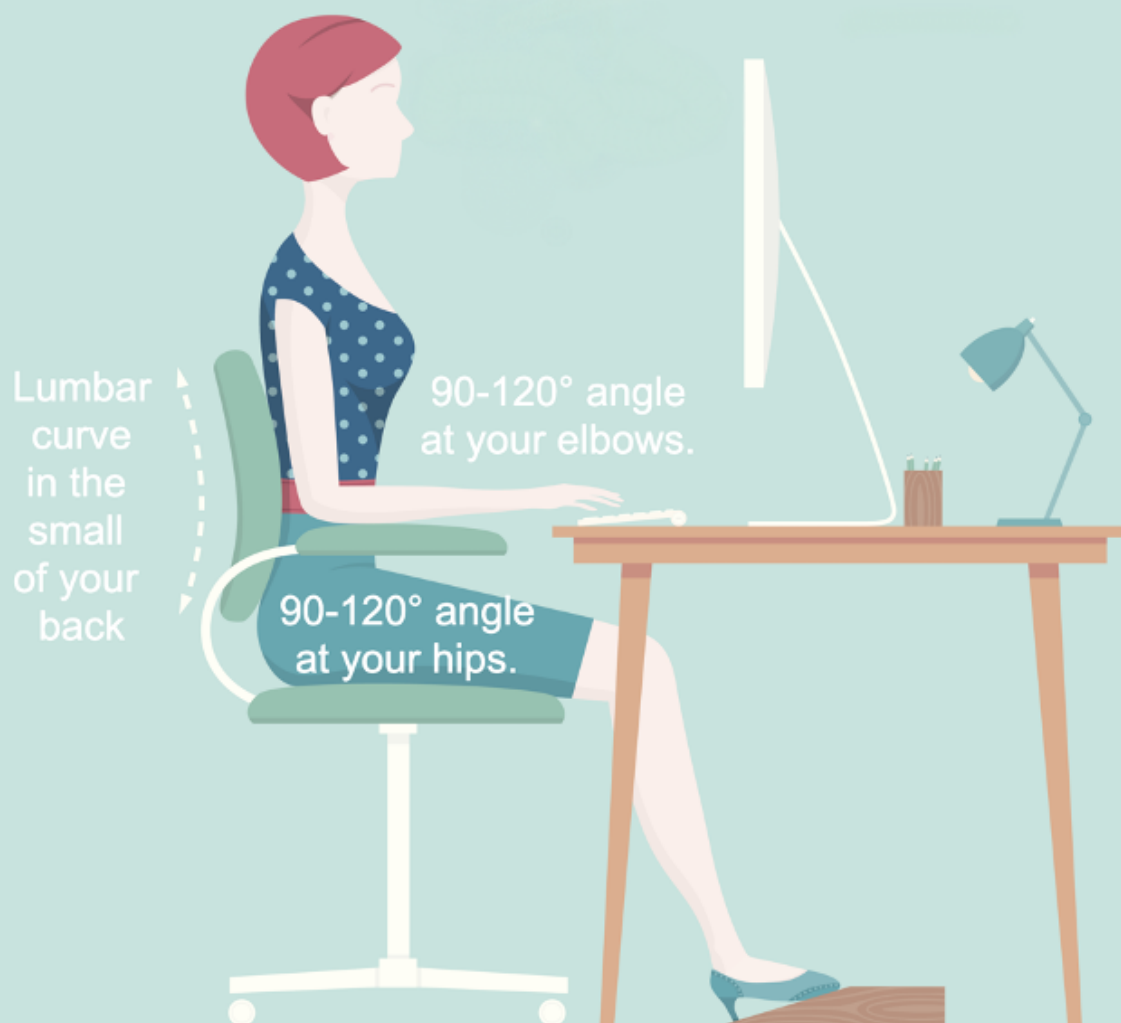
- Most chairs will have at least 2 levers which are usually on the right hand side of the chair. One lever is for the seat height and the other is for the seat back tilt angle. Some chairs have a third lever to adjust the seat base/pan position forward or backwards.
- You can adjust the lumbar support height on the back of the chair or use a lumbar support or lumbar roll.
- Read the instructions for your chair to learn how to adjust your chair for all of these settings.





## SETTING UP YOUR CHAIR - IF YOU HAVE A FIXED-HEIGHT DESK

If your desk doesn't raise or lower in height, then set up your chair height first so that your forearms are parallel to the floor or slightly angled downwards (90-120° elbow angle) when your hands are on your keyboard.



## **FOOTRESTS - IF YOU HAVE A FIXED HEIGHT DESK.**

If you've done that and your thighs aren't parallel to the floor (or a 90-120° hip angle) then you'll need to raise your feet on a footrest. Make sure you get an adjustable height footrest like the examples below.



## SETTING UP YOUR CHAIR - IF YOU HAVE AN ADJUSTABLE DESK

- Start with your chair height and make sure your thighs are parallel to the floor (or slightly angled down between  $90^{\circ}$ - $120^{\circ}$ ).
- From there, the desk height can be adjusted so your forearms are parallel to the floor (or slightly angled down between  $90^{\circ}$ - $120^{\circ}$ ).
- If you have an adjustable desk, a footrest won't be needed.



# SETTING UP YOUR CHAIR:

## The Seat Base/Pan

- Sit as far back into your seat as possible. Make sure there's a space of 3 finger widths between the seat pan and the back of your knees.

## The Backrest

- Adjust the back rest angle so that it fits into the small of your back, supporting your back while sitting upright. Your back and thighs should create a 90-120° angle at your hips.
- The outer-most part of the lumbar support curve should contact your back at the height of the tops of your hip bones

## Arm Rests

- If your chair has armrests, adjust them to support your arms and take pressure off the neck/shoulder area without causing you to elevate (shrug) your shoulders.
- If they cause your shoulders to shrug, or are in the way of getting in close enough to your desk, then lower them or remove the armrests completely.



## USING A DESKTOP COMPUTER & SCREEN

- Adjust the screen(s) height so that the top(s) is/are in line with your eyebrows, just above eye level. You shouldn't need to arch your neck or dip your chin while looking at the screen(s).
- If you use one screen then it should be placed directly in front of your seated position.
- If you have two screens/dual monitors that you use equally, then position them in a 'V' formation and make sure the join in the middle is directly in front of you.
- If using one main screen or laptop and the other is a secondary screen place the main screen directly in front of you like you would with a single screen. Then place the second screen or laptop to the side at a slight angle between 0-15° to minimise glare.
- Your screen should be approximately one arm's length away from you when seated. If you reach your arm out in front of you when sitting, your fingertips should just touch the screen. But if you wear glasses you can adjust your distance to see what's on your screen clearly.
- Set up your workstation at a right angle to windows (if possible) to minimise glare on the screen.



## MONITOR STANDS:

Choose one that's adjustable and allows the top of your screen to be at eyebrow height when seated or standing at your workstation.



## USING YOUR LAPTOP:

Laptops were originally designed for short-term use now people use laptops as their main computer.

The problem is the closeness of the keyboard to the screen. So, when the screen is at the right height, the keyboard position is too high.

And when the keyboard is at the right height, the screen is too low, which causes shoulder and neck pain.



### So, if you use your laptop:

- You'll need to raise it to the correct height so that the top of the screen is in line with your eyebrows.
- Your head and shoulders should be in a comfortable position (you should not be slouched or looking down).
- Once you've raised it to the correct height then your keyboard will be too high so you'll need a separate keyboard and mouse.



## LAPTOP RISERS:

There are plenty of options available.

But make sure you choose one that's height adjustable so you can raise your screen to the correct height for you.

**If you use a laptop riser you'll need a separate keyboard and mouse to be placed at desk height.**





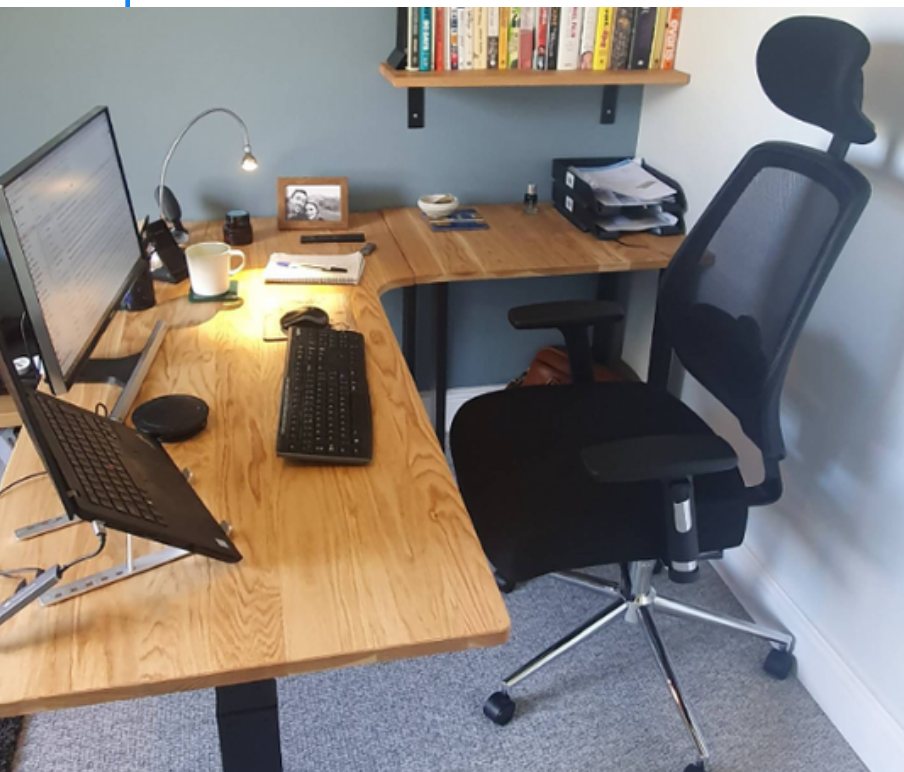
## YOUR KEYBOARD & MOUSE:

Place the keyboard in front of the screen with the centre of the keyboard in line with the centre of the monitor and parallel to the edge of the table or desk.



It's better not to have the "feet" on the keyboard down so you can keep the keyboard flat on the desk and not sloped toward you to avoid bending your wrists which can cause wrist strain.

Keep your wrist position straight or less than 10° angle.



Make sure your keyboard and mouse are on the same level as each other and positioned at least 10 to 15cms away from the edge of the desk or table to provide forearm support when typing.

## HAVE A DESIGNATED WORK SPACE:

Use a home office or find an area in your home and make it your own workspace.

A place where you go to do your work and then leave at the end of the day.

Minimize distractions – keep pets and family members away from your work space if you can.





## LIGHTING:

- Make sure you have good lighting in the room.
- Position your screen sideways to windows to avoid eye strain and fatigue.
- Take notice of how the lighting changes at your workstation throughout the day and minimise any glare on your screen using blinds or curtains.



## TAKE MICROBREAKS:

Microbreaks are any form of activity that involves changing positions for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.

### **Examples of microbreaks:**

- Standing up or walking around the room during phone calls.
- Standing and stretching your arms and neck.
- Leaning back in your chair and stretching your arms and neck.
- Drinking a glass of water.
- Looking away from the computer and into the distance for 20 seconds.



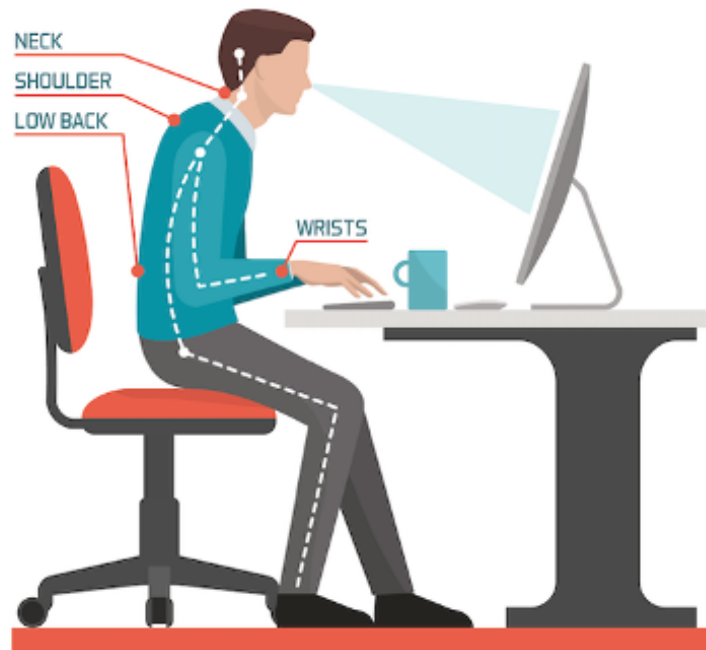


## POSTURE:

Sit up straight with your weight balanced equally on the chair.

Sit back in your chair.

Your shoulders should be relaxed at all times.



**INCORRECT POSTURE:**

## CORRECT POSTURE:



## DIGITAL EYE STRAIN:

Digital eye strain occurs after repetitive screen time. Glare, incorrect viewing distances, uncorrected vision problems, no breaks from working can all cause eye strain.



### Symptoms Include:

- Watery, itchy or dry eyes
- Headaches
- Sore, tired or burning eyes
- Blurred or double vision.

### Avoid Digital Eye Strain

- The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends the 20 -20-20 rule to allow the eyes to rest: Every 20 minutes look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Use an app on your phone or watch to remind you to take breaks from your work station or to look away from the screen.
- Avoid using digital screens outside or in brightly lit areas to avoid glare and eye strain.
- Staring at any device for too long will prevent the blink response which is designed to keep your eyes moist.
- Blue light blocking glasses can help to minimise eye strain.

## KEEP MOVING:

No matter how well your workstation is set out the best thing to do is avoid being in one position for too long.



- It's especially important to keep moving when your home-based work setup is not optimally set up.
- So go for a walk or get up and get a glass of water whenever you have a break and try not to sit at your computer for more than an hour at a time.

## IF YOU HAVE A SIT TO STAND WORKSTATION:

- Don't stand all day. Vary between sitting and standing equally and alternate every 30 to 60 minutes (there's varying research about the optimal amount of time to sit or stand, so do what's comfortable for you).
- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart when standing.
- Make sure your set-up is correct – the height of your keyboard and monitor must be appropriate for sitting and standing.
- Sit when your feet are tired. Stand when your back is tired.
- Wear comfortable shoes when standing.