



## Ergonomics at home – Tips for setting up your workstation

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As many of us are now working from home, our Human Resources Wellness Team would like to share some ergonomic suggestions for your workstation along with some basic virtual stretches.

We appreciate your commitment to fulfilling our Board's mission of providing excellence in public education, confident learners, engaged communities and ethical stewardship. We hope that this information will assist in keeping you as comfortable as possible during this unprecedented time.

Your safety remains a priority and we kindly remind you to continue to be cautious of any slip or trip hazards throughout your workday.

### **On a daily basis and during regular scheduled work hours:**

- 1. Ensure that your workstation is set up in a private and safe area**
- 2. Lock your computer and secure your work before leaving the workstation for break(s) and at the end of your workday**
- 3. Look for and remove all trip and/or slip hazards i.e. secure loose cords/wires, floor is free of debris or liquids**
- 4. Vary your posture throughout the workday between sitting and standing**

We have consulted with Pinnacle Ergonomics to provide some basic stretches that can be performed in your home. We recognize that our employees have varying degrees of physical abilities and some may have medical conditions that require more personalized exercises and/or stretches. You may want to consult with your healthcare provider prior to completing the stretches which can be found [here](#).

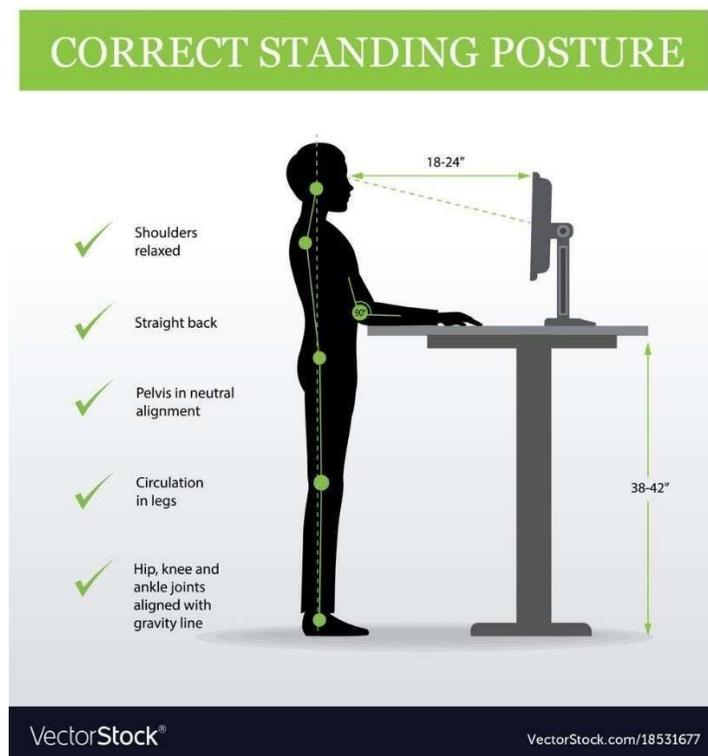
We hope you find the following pages helpful and encourage you contact your respective Human Resources Officer if you have any questions or concerns.

Stay safe and on behalf of the Human Resources Team we look forward to, "Building Tomorrow Together....Every Learner....Every Day"

## Avoiding Muscle Strain While Working from Home

### Recommendations for creating a standing desk:

1. The ideal standing station work surface is between 36 to 42 inches in height (depending on your overall height)
  - kitchen countertops and islands work well
2. Keyboard should be located 1 inch below your elbow height
3. Relax your shoulders. Raised or shrugged shoulders indicate a working surface that is too high
4. Try using a shoebox, containers, books or even folded towels to elevate the laptop if your kitchen counter or island is too low
  - Keep a neutral head position (this means that the head is straight with the chin perpendicular to the floor)
  - When using a laptop, connect an external keyboard and mouse whenever possible so that the laptop screen can be raised to eye level
5. Practice dynamic standing to encourage good circulation and blood flow and minimize static standing (standing with the feet planted)
  - dynamic standing is achieved by shifting your body weight from side to side (movement is very small and slow)
  - Shift your weight as often as needed or at least every 20 minutes



### Recommendations for working from a seated position:

1. Seat yourself in a neutral seated position:
  - Sit back in the chair so that the lower curve of your back is supported by the chair (roll a small towel/blanket or place a small pillow to help achieve lower back support if necessary)
  - Arms bent at an angle no greater than 90-110 degrees
  - Wrists are straight (in neutral position) - try to achieve a straight line from the elbow to the fingers – too much deviation from this neutral position may cause strain
  - Knees bent to form a 90-degree angle (the angle may be slightly greater than 90 degrees based on personal comfort)
  - Feet flat on the floor (a shoebox, book, folded blanket or towel can be used to support your feet if necessary)
2. Your workstation should be adjusted to accommodate a safe, neutral seated position (see image below)
3. If using a chair with adjustable armrests:
  - adjust them so that your elbows meet the armrest when the shoulders are in a relaxed position
  - shrugged shoulders will indicate that the armrests are positioned too high
4. If using a chair without adjustable armrests:
  - Utilize small towels/cloths to achieve the desired height and secure them to the armrest
5. The keyboard is recommended to be 1 inch lower than your elbow
6. If your kitchen counter or island is too low -try to elevate the laptop using a wide shoebox, container, books or even folded towels if your kitchen counter or island is too low
  - Keep a neutral head position (where the head is straight, chin perpendicular to the floor)
  - Use an external keyboard and/or mouse whenever you can so that your laptop screen can be set at eye level
7. Once the above workstation adjustments have been made you will now want to ensure that your chair is at the appropriate height (imagine a straight, horizontal line from your hip joint to your knee):
  - If the hip is at a height above the top of your knee – this would indicate that your chair is too high
  - If the hip is at a height below the top of your knee – this would indicate that the chair is too low



## Quick Tips and Fun Facts

1. Our bodies are designed to move:
  - Try not to sit for longer than 20-30 minutes straight.
  - Try to take micro breaks (short breaks of about 1-5 minutes) between sitting and standing computer work.
  - Taking short breaks increases productivity by bringing more oxygen to the lungs and vital organs.
  - To help you stay focused on moving and not fall complacent in sitting -try setting your phone, computer or even your stove timer as a reminder for you to move.
2. Metabolism slows down 90% after 30 minutes of sitting:
  - Getting up for 5 minutes will get the body's internal activities going again and strengthening our lower muscles to avoid muscle atrophy.
  - Muscle atrophy is when muscles waste away which is usually caused by a lack of physical activity.
3. Stay hydrated using the 8 x 8 rule:
  - Practice drinking 8 x 8-ounce glasses of water a day which is roughly 2L.
  - Drinking 30 minutes before each meal is shown to be the most effective.
  - Water promotes cardiovascular health, keeps the body cool, helps muscles and joints work better and helps us "flush out" any virus.
4. Take 10 minutes out to interact with your pet or meditate:
  - Studies have shown that both activities produce a significant reduction in Cortisol (a major stress hormone).
5. Practice the 20-20-20 Rule:
  - Every 20 minutes of work at a computer, look away from the computer to an object that is roughly 20 feet away for 20 seconds.



6. Move your ankles and feet when sitting:
  - This helps to promote circulation and reduce leg fatigue.
  - With your feet pressed firmly on the floor (or object you chose as a footrest) and your knees at a 90degree angle, lift both heels up off the floor, lower, and then lift both toes up off the floor, pulling them towards your shins.
  - Try to keep a steady rocking motion. You can also can alternate your feet so the toes on one foot are raised while the heels on the other are raised.

Important note: We all have different body types and medical conditions so chose a position that feels comfortable for you. It is recommended that you change your position frequently and alternating between tasks as to avoid any unnecessary strain.

**Work safe and stay healthy!**