

COVID-19 HR Factsheet: Tips on Working from Home

1. Introduction

The current Covid-19 outbreak means that many people are having to adapt to working at home for the first time. For employees who have never worked from home before, this situation may present a number of challenges: from setting up a designated workspace to coping with the sudden loss of social interaction with colleagues. Even for those who have experienced home working in the past, the restrictions on social interaction create unprecedented working conditions.

This factsheet takes you through a home working journey, from making sure your workspace is set up properly, through to achieving the right balance between work and home life, and staying mentally fit, active and healthy.

2. Setting Up Your Workspace

Setting up the ideal workspace is an essential part of working at home efficiently. However, in the current period, many people will be working from home in less-than-ideal situations but whether you are working from a home office or the dining room table, there are a number of ways that you can create a productive workspace at home.

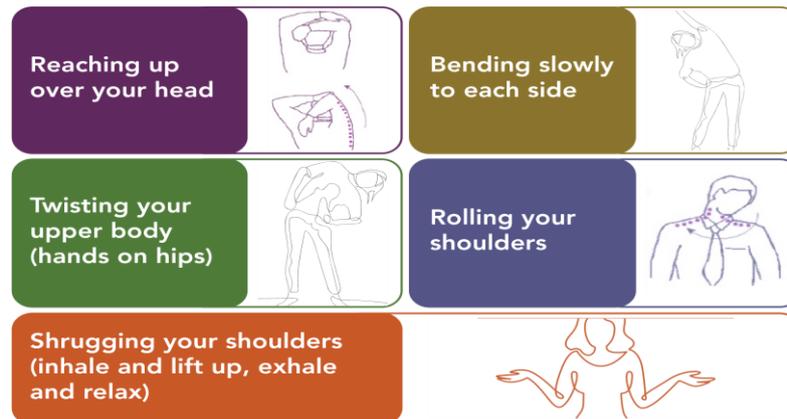
It is important to aim to have a dedicated area to work from every day; preferably, this should be an enclosed space such as a study or a quiet area of your home. In the absence of an ergonomic chair and desk, as well as desk screen equipment, you can take the below measures to easily improve your current workspace:

- If you are working from a laptop, try and make it as much like a desktop computer as possible. Use a screen lift (or, if that isn't an option, a pile of books) to raise your screen so that your eyebrows are level with the top of the screen.
- Consider using a chair with support, such that your feet rest comfortably on the floor and the backrest gives you good support.
- If you are going to be spending a lot of time on calls, consider using headphones to avoid overusing or straining your arm or neck muscles.
- Try to work in a room that receives lots of natural light and, depending on how you normally like to work; you may want to add some background noise to recreate the general buzz of an office environment.

3. Musculoskeletal Health

Working in a safe way in a home setting remains as important as in the office. The following provides suggestions on stretching:

- Look away from your screen every 20-30 minutes and gaze out the window, allowing your eyes to relax for a few minutes.
- Make sure you have space to move, stretch and fidget.
- Move around your home space every hour, and complete a set of short stretches for your neck, wrists, shoulders, and hips, holding each movement for about 30 seconds.



Even if you cannot get outside, you could undertake some sort of exercise each day and use those muscles that are not activated by desk-based working. Please check out the HR Covid19 Factsheet Fitness Studio Exercises at Home for exercises to help you maintain health and wellbeing whilst at home.

4. Establishing Your Routine

Most of us have a fairly regular daily routine on a work day. Establishing a similar sense of routine while working at home can help you to stay productive and happy at work – as well as helping you to feel some sense of security and control.

When you work from home, it is easy to roll out of bed, turn your laptop on and start working. This approach is not recommended and instead start your day as you would if you were commuting to the office. Starting your day right means that you stick to the same morning routine. Sticking to a schedule will bring some structure to your day.

5. Work-Life Balance

While working from home may be familiar to some, for a lot of people this will be a major change. Below we have outlined some steps to help with the work-life balance:

- **Discussions with your manager** to talk about the realities of working from home. Communication about your flexibilities and restrictions in your new set up will help your manager work with you to support this new work situation.
- **Caring responsibilities:** some employees have caring responsibilities that make maintaining normal working hours more complicated. You should consider discussing your working hours and critical priorities with your manager so that you can plan with

your family when you need to be working and the working hours that can be adjusted to support caring duties.

- **Communicating boundaries:** some employees may find themselves not only working from home, but doing so with other members of the family or flatmates. Respectfully communicating boundaries so that you can remain productive can help everyone live and work together more easily.
- **Social media:** maintaining a minimal social media presence as you would do in an office can help keep you focused during work hours.
- **Sleep patterns:** Spending a lot of time in one space for both work and leisure may affect your quality of sleep, which will then affect your work. Creating a calming night-time routine can aid good-quality sleep, and mindfulness apps can support you to detach from work
- **Non-screen activities:** without the need to commute, you may find yourself with extra time on your hands in the evening. This can be a great opportunity to invest in a non-screen related activity, such as reading.
- **Eating three proper meals a day:** with your kitchen in easy reach, it can be tempting to graze throughout the day rather than make proper meals. However, taking a full lunch break and making yourself a balanced meal will help not only ensure that you are eating right, but also help break up the day.
- **Staying in touch:** while normal social interactions are obviously constrained, make sure you put aside time to stay in touch with friends and family. Online or video meet-ups using WhatsApp, Facetime, Skype, Zoom, Teams or Google Hangouts are a great way to stay in touch, so you can see the faces of loved ones while talking to them.

6. Mental Wellbeing

Working from home and avoiding social contact is an important way to help lessen the spread of Covid-19. However, it is equally important to stay mindful of your mental health during this challenging time.

Keep in contact with colleagues throughout the day. Use phone or video calls as much as possible – even if the conversation could be carried out over email. This will help you feel less isolated.

Check out the HR Covid19 Factsheet Health and Wellbeing Apps for helpful tips on how to improve your mental health.