

Setting Up Your Workstation at Home

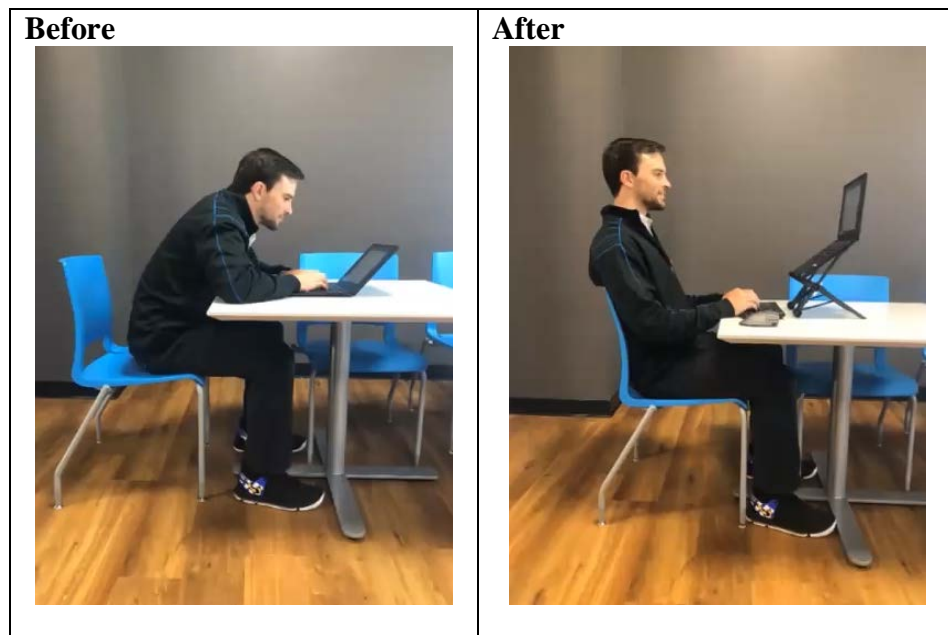
Working from home is a challenge from the perspective of ergonomics. It is likely that you will not be using a fully adjustable chair. This along with the fact that most tables will be slightly higher than a standard desk, makes acquiring the best relationship between seated elbow height and keyboard height difficult to achieve. Laptop use, which is also common, creates additional ergonomic problems. The small size of laptops create ergonomic hazards, such as forward neck extension while viewing screens, wrist deviations while typing, and contact hazards from resting wrists and forearms on hard surfaces.

The following are some possible ways to address some of the ergonomic challenges that arise from working at home.

Laptops (see photos)

If you must use a laptop, consider the following:

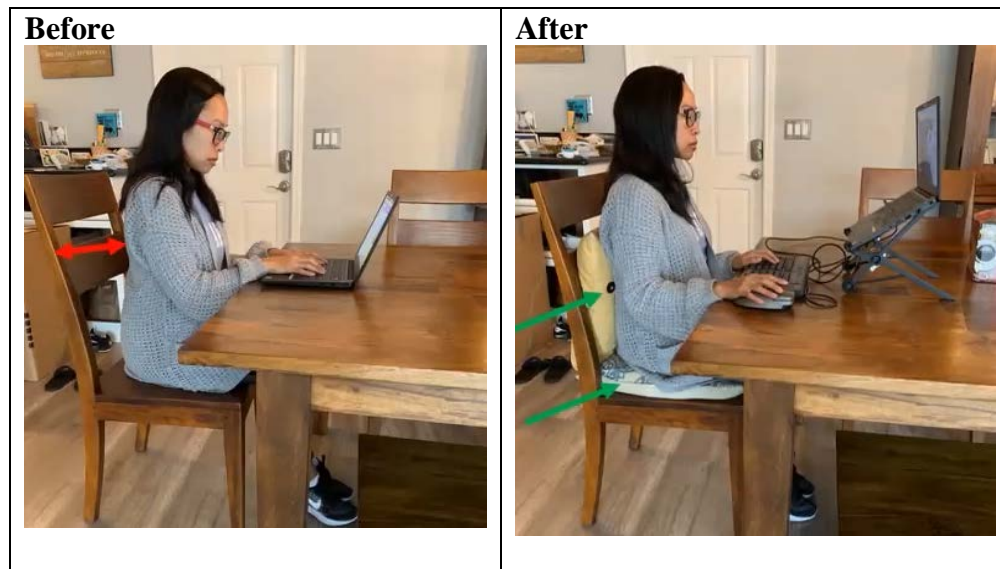
- Use an external keyboard and mouse. Locate these close to your body to prevent you from reaching your arms forward and resting wrist/forearms on desktop.
- Utilize an external monitor if possible. If an external monitor is not available, elevate laptop using laptop stand, books, or container.
- Locate screen at eye-level (or slightly lower) and at a distance that easily within arm's reach.
- More frequent mini-breaks may be necessary if using a laptop without the benefit of external devices.



Chairs

Chairs that you use at home are more likely to lack adjustability and may lack adequate cushion. If this describes the chair that you are using, consider the following:

- Use a cushion on the seat. This will provide padding against the hard surface of the chair and more importantly it will increase your seated height. Remember, your seated elbow height should approximate the height of your keyboard.
- Sit back in chair with spine fully supported against back of chair. If chair is too deep, consider using a cushion against back support.
- Support feet directly on floor or footrest. Items such as a container, book, or small container can be substituted for an actual footrest. It is important to support feet so that knees are equal or slightly below hip-level.



Things to Consider when Working from Home:

1. Occasionally stand while using your computer. This may involve placing your laptop on a countertop or other surface.
2. Have a designated working area. The area should be quiet, have good lighting and be as distraction free as possible.
3. Workstation should be arranged in a manner that places items that are frequently used close to the body to reduce overreaching. Remove any unnecessary clutter and eliminate any trip hazards. Set up your desk properly with everything you need.
4. Work smarter – From video calls to instant messaging apps, there are many ways to keep in touch and boost productivity, as well as feelings of camaraderie, rather than isolation.
5. Even though you are at home, try hard to treat work like work. Keep a reasonable routine and set clear and defined boundaries between work and personal life. Start each day by getting dressed, reviewing your schedule, making a to-do list, thus getting into an “I’m at work” mind-set.

6. Regular meetings and communication are essential – the only difference is that people might be in different locations.
7. Take breaks away from your desk – go to the gym or walk the dog, especially if you tend to have a working lunch.
8. Keep yourself fueled. Drink plenty of water and eat regular, nutritious meals and snacks to help remain focused.

Breaks:

- Take a one to two-minute micro-break every 20 to 30 minutes to reduce sustained awkward postures and repetitive motions.
- Breaks are emphasized when using a laptop or other ergonomically sub-optimal work stations.
- Consider using a timer or download a break reminder app (i.e. Big Stretch Reminder, Stand Up!)

Ergonomics Training

Telecommuters are encouraged to take the Office Ergonomics Course in MyLearning: [Office Ergonomics](#)

Other useful information regarding ergonomics can be obtained on-line. Two such websites are:

- OSHA Computer Workstation Check List
www.osha.gov./SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html
- Cornell Ergo Tips
ergo.human.cornell.edu/ErgoTips2002/home.html

If you have any questions, please contact HSE at HSEinfo@jhmi.edu.