

Working remotely and home office ergonomic tips

As we transition to working remotely, Iowa State University encourages you to follow these easy to implement ergonomic principles in your home office. Using these principles will enable you to improve body positioning, reduce strain/stress, and prevent ergonomic injury or illness.

Set the computer monitor to eye level: Aligning the top of the computer screen with the level of your sight line can support better posture and reduce glare. If using a laptop, elevate the device by using books or boxes to create a level surface. Monitor risers are commercially available and made to adjust the elevation of the screen.

Follow the “20-20-20” rule: For visual comfort, maintain a computer monitor at around arm’s length and use the 20-20-20 rule: Look at something away from the computer screen that is at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.

Use an external keyboard and mouse: Whenever possible, use a wired or wireless keyboard and mouse with an elevated laptop. External keyboards that are separated from the laptop can allow for typing at your specific height and grant you greater flexibility and ease when typing.

Enhance arm support when seated: Set your chair to a height that allows your arms to be relaxed at the side of your body and your elbows to rest at a 90-degree angle. This supports neutral arm positioning while keying or using a mouse.

Optimize lumbar support: If a chair lacks lumbar support, a pillow positioned at a lower back height can provide support. Be sure to use the chair’s backrest for support and recline the adjustable backrest slightly to reduce vertical load on the lower back.

Improve your seated posture and comfort: Using a cushion can increase your seated height, allowing recommended arm positioning and benefit your overall seated working posture. If a higher seated position is used, ensure that your feet are well-supported. A box can be employed as a footrest and adjustable footrests are also available online.

Get up and move around: When sitting and working for extended periods of time, get up and move around at least every hour. Following the 20-20-20 rule can also serve as a reminder to rest your eyes and relax your body after working in one spot.

[Additional resources](#) for workplace ergonomics are available from Environmental Health and Safety. An online [Office Ergonomics](#) training course is available through Learn@ISU. This course focuses on preventing repetitive motion injury, configuring a proper workstation and learning about the causes and solutions for computer-related eyestrain.