



Safety Note

28 April 2022

COVID-19: keeping safe and well when working from home

As restrictions continue to ease, most workers have returned to on-campus work. However, there may be instances where you need to work from home:

- If you feel unwell, but well enough to conduct your work
- Test positive to COVID-19 but feel well enough to continue working
- Become a close contact for COVID-19 (recommended you work from home if possible)

For many people the idea of working from home is appealing. However, the reality can be more challenging than one might expect. When we come to work, generally we have a routine- 'book-ends' to our day, in terms of start, finish and break times. When we work from home, it is easy to lose our normal routines, which can negatively impact not only our productivity but our overall sense of wellbeing. You may want to complete the [Working from home online learning module](#) from Worksafe Qld to raise your awareness and knowledge of common safety, health and wellbeing risks when working from home.

Here are some recommendations for keeping well when working home and working safely.

- **Set up your workspace.** It is important to have a space to work, free of distractions and one that is ergonomically sound. It is not recommended you set-up your laptop in bed. For resources on how to set up your workstation, see the **COVID-19: The reality of working from home** factsheet in the resources link below. Also ensure your workspace is free from hazards, such as cords or other trip hazards.
- **Set up your routine.** Approach working from home as you would a normal day in the office. Try to get up at the same time and maintain your usual morning routine. This can include having a shower, getting dressed and even making your lunch for the day. Set your to do list, establish your priorities and tick off your achievements as you go.
- **Set your atmosphere.** Do you work better with a bit of background noise, or prefer a quiet space? Set up your environment in a way that is pleasing to you. If the four walls start to close in, take a break, mix it up a bit with some light background music or open the windows to let in some fresh air.
- **Avoid snack distractions.** If you find yourself headed for the pantry more often when at home (working or weekends) have a plan in place to stop the excess snacking. Before you reach for the fridge, ask yourself: *"Am I hungry, bored, or procrastinating?"* As you might for work, consider preparing your snacks and meals for the day in advance, so that they are in easy reach when it is time for a break. Try not to overdo the caffeine either; consider caffeine-free tea as a healthy substitute.
- **Take a break.** The same principles apply as a normal workday- take regular restorative breaks for a stretch, fresh air and posture adjustment.
- **Set boundaries.** Working from home doesn't mean you are accessible 24/7. Make sure your normal work hours apply. This is also relevant if you have other household member's home with you. Try to establish early on how you will manage the situation (e.g. caring responsibilities, availability etc.) to minimise frustrations and potential conflict from escalating.



- **Keep active.** Working from home can often mean that we start to miss out on even the incidental exercise we get from commuting (e.g. walking to the bus, from the carpark etc). Keeping active is a good way to reduce the feeling of cabin fever kicking in. Social distancing can still be observed while walking the dog but if you have to stay indoors why not follow an online workout- there are plenty of free and available options suitable for most people on YouTube.
- **Limit social media distractions.** It is important to keep in touch with colleagues and your social network, even if working from home. However, if you are easily distracted, make it hard for yourself during work time to access social media and turn off your notifications.
- **Keep connected.** It is important to keep connected with your social network and your colleagues to avoid feeling too isolated. To avoid heading into the working from home bubble, set up regular videoconferencing meetings with co-workers to keep in touch, rather than just relying on emails.
- **After work, go 'home'.** Set up your transition routine from working from home to being at home. Clear away the work, change your clothes, walk the dog, listen to a podcast- do whatever you would normally do to set the 'mental boundary' between work and home.
- **Leave requirements.** If you have additional caring responsibilities or become unwell while working from home you should discuss your work or leave arrangement options with your supervisor.

Resources and links

1. [WorkSafe Qld – Health and safety for working from home](#)
2. [COVID-19 The reality of working from home](#)
3. [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) advice for the UQ community](#)
4. [The Employee Assistance Program \(UQ staff\)](#)
5. [HSW events calendar \(for online UQ Wellness events\)](#)
6. [Online Computer Workstation Self-assessment tool](#)
7. [Home Office Inspection Checklist](#)