

Safety Note

28 April 2022

COVID-19: The reality of working from home

Background

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)

Working Safely from Home

- Utilise UQ's [Computer Workstation Online Self-Assessment tool](#) to ensure your home workstation is set up as optimally as possible.
- The Safety Note - [Keeping Safe When Working From Home](#) provides guidance and resources to assist UQ workers set up a routine for effective working from home arrangement.
- Worksafe [Working from home online learning module](#) to raise awareness and knowledge of common safety, health and wellbeing risks when working from home.
- Ensure your smoke alarms are working and meet [current requirements](#).

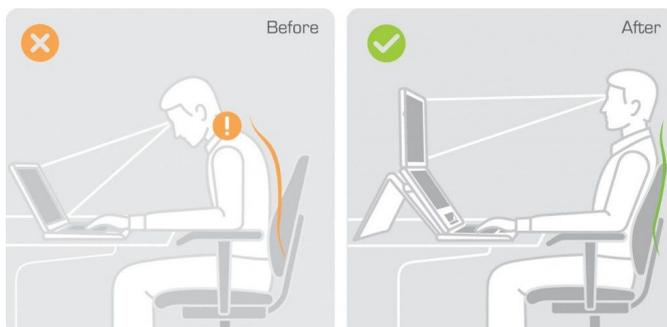
Computer-related musculoskeletal disorders

If you experience discomfort while working from home, consult your [local WHSC](#) for advice. If you do not have a WHSC, please send to hsw@uq.edu.au.

Common Issues and Solutions

Laptop use

If you are using a laptop as the sole computer and monitor, you may be sitting with the head forward and neck in a flexed position, possibly resulting in neck pain and headaches. Using the laptop keyboard and track pad may cause forward reaching or leaning forward onto the desk, leading to upper back and shoulder discomfort.



Easy DIY laptop riser options

Use a box or some books if you don't have a laptop stand to elevate your laptop and use external keyboard and mouse to minimise strain on your head, neck, shoulders and upper back.



Some examples of DIY laptop risers. Try a wire file rack or a stack of old textbooks

Prolonged sitting

If you normally use a sit/stand desk at work and are noticing lower back discomfort associated with prolonged sitting or maybe your home office chair is not as supportive as you would like, you may be able to create a standing workstation at home. Try moving your laptop around the house to find a standing height that works for you. Some options might be the kitchen bench, ironing board, laundry basket on top of the desk or a bookshelf. The optimal height should be close to your standing elbow height. Remember it's still important to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day. Too long in any posture is likely to lead to discomfort.



Some examples of DIY home standing workstations. Make sure to alternate between sitting and standing to minimise discomfort.

For more advice visit the [Symptom Checker](#) section of the online self-assessment tool.

Other simple changes you can make to your workstation

- Use an old textbook as a footrest.
- Use your paperback novels or old magazines for monitor risers.
- Consider purchasing inexpensive compact keyboards and vertical mice, from local retailers like Officeworks or Kmart.



Steps you can take to support your health and well-being

- Make sure you take a lunch break away from your home workstation.
- Plan to eat as if you were away from home, prepare your lunch and snacks ahead of time. Drink adequate water to avoid snacking.
- Go for a walk during your lunch break or in the time you would normally be commuting to work.
- Change your posture as frequently as you can; consider taking phone calls away from the desk if you don't need the computer.
- Make time to chat with colleagues (Zoom, email, Teams, etc.). Schedule an electronic coffee catch-up with a friend you would normally grab a coffee with on campus.