

Health Insights

July 2022

Work Smarter at Home

When working at home, it's good to take a break every 30 minutes to stay healthy and minimize injury to your back, shoulders, and arms, says Kermit Davis, Ph.D., an expert in office ergonomics at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. "The body doesn't like static postures continually because you don't want to do all sitting or all standing all the time. You want to alter your position and change it up throughout the day."

Workers across the nation have converted at-home spaces into makeshift offices during the coronavirus pandemic. But few had guidance when it came to making new spaces ergonomically safe. Most businesses discouraged employees from taking home their monitors, chairs, and other office equipment. This lack of guidance left employees to build home offices and use equipment not intended for long-term use.

Davis conducted an ergonomic assessment of employees at the University of Cincinnati, sending out an email survey to faculty and staff after the coronavirus pandemic prompted the university to go remote. The survey had 843 people complete it.

Davis says the ergonomic evaluations of the home workstations identified many issues that could adversely affect the workers. Many chairs were the wrong height, with about 41% too low and 2% too high. 53% of workers had armrests on their chairs, but 32% did not use them. Not using the armrests causes contact stress on forearms when rested on the hard front edge of work surfaces and strain across the upper back as the arms need support. 69% said they didn't use their chair's back support, and 73% reported not having any lumbar support.

The position of a computer monitor was often too low or off to the side. Three-quarters of monitors were laptops, which were too low relative to the workers' eye height. External monitors were also routinely set up too low in 52% of participants or too high in 4%. According to the study, another common issue was the lack of primary screens centered in front of the worker's vision, occurring in 31% of respondents twisting their necks and/or back to view the monitor.

Here are a few tips that might be helpful:

- Place a pillow on your seat to elevate the seat height or behind your back to provide lumbar support.
- Try raising the monitor.
- Use an external keyboard and mouse.
- Standing workstations should have the top of the monitor at eye height and directly in front, keyboards positioned at a height so that forearms are parallel to the ground (approximately 90° elbow angle), and a soft or rounded front edge to the working surface.
- If obtaining a new chair or identifying an appropriate sitting workstation at home is not possible, rotating between a poor sitting workstation and a standing workstation would be the next best practice.

University of Cincinnati. "Ergonomics expert says work smarter at home: Sit up, raise the screen, pad the chair." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 28 July 2020. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/07/200728150637.htm



Mental Health Moment

How to Make Your Telework Environment More Healthy

Many workers continue to work from home, whether full-time or on a hybrid schedule. Your work arrangements must not take a toll on your health. Here are some tips that can help you optimize your telework environment, improve your health, and reduce stress.

Space

Find a space where noise, lighting, and temperature are comfortable and well-controlled. Even if you are at home, a dedicated workspace can help you focus better.

Seating

An office chair with armrests is ideal for sitting. Avoid working on a couch or soft chairs. Allow your feet to rest flat on the floor with your hips and knees at a 90-degree angle. Periodically stand and work as an alternative to sitting. Ensure that your seating supports the natural curve of your back.

Computer Setup

Place any external monitors about an arm's length away with the top of the monitor at or slightly below eye level. Position monitors to reduce glare from windows or other light sources. If you use an external keyboard or mouse, maintain good wrist and elbow posture.

Take Breaks

Periodic rests and changes in posture are beneficial. Ensure that you also take breaks from screen time, including tablets or cell phones. Try the 20/20/20 rule to help combat eye fatigue.

Stress

Working from home can blur the lines between work and home. Take these steps to reduce stress while teleworking:

- Keep a routine
- Create focus times
- Go to bed and wake at the same time each day.
- Exercise
- Eat healthy meals
- Spend 30 minutes outside in daylight

"Working from Home: How to Optimize Your Work Environment and Stay Healthy." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/11/20/working-from-home/>.

Job Burnout: What Is It and What Do I Do?

Job burnout is a particular type of work-related stress – a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity. Many factors could lead to job burnout, including depression, personality traits, and personal life. Whatever the cause, job burnout can affect your physical and mental performance at and away from work. You may be experiencing burnout if you ask yourself:

- Do I drag myself to work and have trouble getting started?
- Do I lack the energy to be consistently productive?
- Do I find it hard to concentrate?
- Have my sleep habits changed?
- Am I troubled by unexplained headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints?

What to do if you feel burnt out at work:

- **Seek support:** Reach out to co-workers, friends, or loved ones to help you cope. Take advantage of mental health services if you have access to an employee assistance program.
- **Try a relaxing or mindfulness activity:** Explore programs that can help with stress, such as yoga, meditation, or mindfulness apps.
- **Evaluate your options:** Discuss concerns with your manager or supervisor. Set specific goals while you are at work. Try to determine what tasks are priorities and which ones can wait.
- **Get some exercise.**
- **Get some sleep.**

"Know the Signs of Job Burnout." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 5 June 2021, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>.

Pork, Pineapple, and Onion Skewers

Ingredient List:

- 1 lb. pork loin, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 8 oz. baby peppers (mixed colors), cut into 1-inch pieces
- ½ small pineapple (about 1 lb.), trimmed, cored, and cut into 1-inch pieces (about 2 cups)
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small red onion, cut into 6 wedges, each halved crosswise
- Kosher salt and pepper
- Garlic-Ginger Teriyaki Sauce, for basting

Directions

1. In a large bowl, toss pork, pineapple, onion, and peppers with oil and ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper.
2. Thread pork and vegetables onto skewers. Grill, occasionally turning until pork is cooked through (about 8 to 10 minutes total). During the last 5 minutes of cooking, baste with teriyaki sauce.

Nutritional Information (per serving): About 310 calories, 11 g fat (2.5 g saturated), 29 g protein, 895 mg sodium, 24 g carb, 2 g fiber

Merker, Kate. "Pork, Pineapple and Onion Skewers". Good Housekeeping. Accessed 01 June 2022.
<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/food-recipes/a38867737/pork-pineapple-and-onion-skewers-recipe/>

July Quiz

Work Smarter at Home

1. Not using your armrests causes what?

- a. Nothing, it's just preference.
- b. Contact stress on your forearms.
- c. Stress on your neck muscles.
- d. More comfort when sitting.

2. Which of these is not true?

- a. Place a pillow to elevate seat height or behind your back for lumbar support.
- b. Raise your monitor to reduce strain.
- c. Using a laptop is recommended over an external keyboard and mouse.
- d. Go on a break every 30 minutes to stay healthy and reduce injury.

How to Make Your Telework Environment More Healthy

3. True/False: You should work in a room that has controllable noise, lighting, and temperature.

☐ True ☐ False

4. When using a keyboard and mouse, you should maintain good _____ posture

- a. Wrist and elbow
- b. Knee
- c. Back
- d. Neck

Mental Health Moment

5. How should you react to job burnout?

- a. Inform my manager or supervisor that I will be resigning.
- b. Seek support from others.
- c. Get better sleep.
- d. B & C

See page 5 for quiz answers

Healthy Habits Calendar

July 2022 - Environmental Health

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Welcome to July! Stand Up For Health Challenge	2 Social Saturday: Explore a new trail with friends
3 Self-care Sunday: Do something you enjoy	4 Independence Day	5 Tasty Tuesday: Try this month's recipe, Pork and Pineapple Skewers	6	7 Thirsty Thursday: Try drinking your body weight in water (ounces)	8	9 Service Saturday: Donate unnecessary items
10 Eid al-Adha	11 Motivation Monday: "Nothing is impossible. The word itself says 'I'm possible!'" - Audrey Hepburn	12	13 Walking Wednesday: Walk 10,000 steps	14	15 Fun Friday: Do a DIY project	16
17 Savvy Sunday: Try something new	18	19 Thankful Tuesday: Express gratitude to someone close to you	20	21 Challenge Check-in: Are you close to bingo?	22 Fitness Friday: Try a group fitness class	23
24	25 Mellow Monday: Enjoy 20 mins of self-care before bed	26	27 Wellness Wednesday: Take a break from social media	28	29	30 Sustainable Saturday: Go Paperless. Utilize e-documents
31 Challenge Check-in: Did you get black out?						

Challenge:

Stand Up for Health

30 Day Challenge:

Stand up and take a stretch break twice every hour while you're at the office or teleworking. This allows you to take a mental break from work and can help you be more productive. To help you remember, try setting a timer or other reminder to take your stretch break every 30 minutes.

Week 1

Stand up and take a stretch break twice every hour.

1 st Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 nd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 rd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Week 2

Stand up and take a stretch break twice every hour.

1 st Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 nd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 rd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Week 3

Stand up and take a stretch break twice every hour.

1 st Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 nd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 rd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Week 4

Stand up and take a stretch break twice every hour.

1 st Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 nd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 rd Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 th Hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Answers to Quiz:

Q1: b. Contact stress on your forearms. | Q2: c Using a laptop is recommended over an external keyboard and mouse.
Q3: True | Q4: a Wrist and elbow | Q5: d B&C