

# DSE advice for working at home

## Preventative actions:

- **Take regular breaks:** as most users working from home will not have a typical office chair or office desk the best preventative action any user can take is taking a break every 30 minutes from their home working station. Move around, take a walk or make a cup of coffee, anything that gets the body moving will help.
- **Consider standing** for short periods of time to use a laptop. Standing up using a kitchen worktop is okay for short periods of time, remember to keep power leads and cables tidy.
- **Stress and communication:** we have all suddenly changed our working environment and can make feel a little lost and overwhelmed, staying in touch with colleagues via Zoom, email or telephone is recommended. There are additional services available via Occupational Health if needed, please note there are activities arranged by webinar to support good posture including back exercises and yoga.
- **Thermal comfort:** In the majority of cases working in environments that people find too hot or too cold will not lead to physical harm. However it may affect morale and may affect productivity. It can also contribute to stress. Make sure you have suitable clothing, heating and have cushions and rugs to hand to help you keep comfortable.
- **Perform stretches and gentle exercise:** There are a variety of gentle exercise programs available over the internet as well as specific stretching for working at a computer.

## Practical DSE adaptations:

Please note; the image below shows a user seated in an office chair; the same theory applies when seated in a fixed chair (such as a dining room chair). Following the three tips below to find a more comfortable seating position.

1. **Straight spine**; imagine a line running through your ear, shoulder and hip (see image below), keeping your body aligned in a straight line, with your back against the chair.
2. **Hips higher than knees**; To prevent fatigue and sore legs ensure your hips are higher than your knees and there is a shallow angle leading down to you knee.
3. **Feet flat on the floor or on a foot stool**; support your feet where possible.



- **PC Monitor height:** A very helpful measure of how well your home working station is setup is the position of your PC or laptop monitor, the monitor should be slightly lower than your face when you are seated upright. For PC users this can be adjusted reasonably easily however, for those using a laptop it can be a little trickier. Try to find a suitable way to raise your entire laptop to a height where the monitor is higher perhaps by using a laptop stand. Another option is to plug in a separate external PC monitor and separate keyboard to the laptop to create a PC workstation that can be adjusted to a suitable height.
- **Desk height / arm height:** If you are using a fixed table such as a dining room table or picnic table, we have to be a little creative with finding the correct seating position. Use cushions to raise your seating height to add additional comfort, the ideal position for the arms is to have a 90° angle in the elbow while seated at the desk. If a user can sit comfortably with a 90° angle in the elbow it means the rest of the body is in a reasonable seating position.

In some cases, it might not be possible to use computer at a desk while at home, in such instances an speak to your Line Manager to agree what alternatives are available. Perhaps telephone support or minimal work with a smartphone could be arranged.

If any user has complex DSE requirements, please ask them to contact the Health and Safety office via [safety@essex.ac.uk](mailto:safety@essex.ac.uk)