

Staying healthy while working/staying at home

There are 3 keys to keeping your body balanced, strong and pain free while working/staying at home – variety, movement and the structural alignment of your body (posture).

Key #1 – Variety

On the following page is a visual showing you the ‘ideal’ home workstation setup. But remember your body needs variety. Having a variety of positions helps keep the muscles of your body in balance and reduces the chances of you feeling stiffness and pain. With this in mind:

- Every few days change this ideal setup a little. For example, raise the chair height if it's adjustable or sit on a cushion, change the height of the screen or move it a bit to the left, move where the mouse is a little or swap hands etc.
- If you're using a laptop, adopt a range of positions. For example, place it on a cabinet or counter so you can use it while standing, or put it on your coffee table so you can use it while sitting on the floor. Be creative.
- Sitting on the sofa with your laptop is ok now and then but definitely not the majority of the time because it encourages you to slump while you sit.

Listen to your body! When you feel a little stiff (or ideally before that) change to a different position. Mix things up and avoid sameness.

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Ideal Home Workstation



- Screen approximately at eye level
- Shoulders relaxed
- External keyboard and mouse
- 90 degree angle at elbow
- Pelvis rolled forward gently to put a small arch in lower back
- 90 degree angle at knee
- Feet flat on floor (use foot stand if your feet can't reach the floor)

Should you sit like this all the time? Of course not. **Remember variety is the spice of life!** Sometimes lean forward, sometimes back, sometimes cross your legs. Mix things up!

For a standing desk setup all of the above principles apply except for rolling your pelvis forward and of course maintaining a 90 degree angle at your knee!

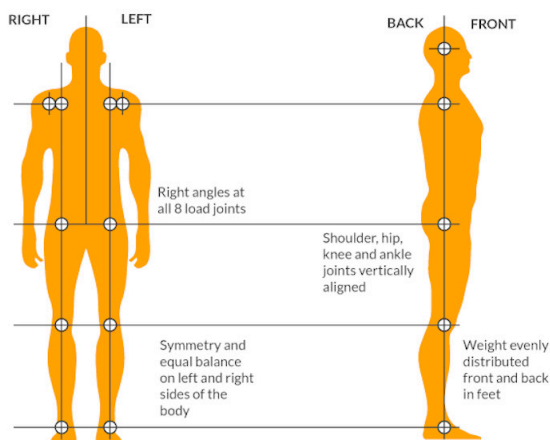
Key #2 – Movement

Your body is designed to move, and a certain amount of movement and stimulus keeps your bones, joints, muscles and organs working well. With this in mind:

- Get up every 30-60 minutes and grab a glass of water, go to the toilet, stretch your arms to the sky etc. Set a reminder on your phone if you need to.
- Walk around your home when on a phone call.
- Have a daily routine of 20-30 minutes of exercising. There are so many tools available online to help you do this and if your local gym or wellness studio is closed, check if they have any online classes – yoga, pilates, fitness, strength classes etc. It's a good way to support local instructors/therapists who probably won't be seeing many clients/students right now. If pain or injuries affect your ability to do this see key #3.

Key #3 – Your structural alignment (posture)

Your workstation setup is important, as is maintaining variety as well as moving regularly, but what's equally if not more important, is **the alignment** of the body you bring to this workstation and that you move with.



The better the balance of your muscles from left to right, and from front to back, the closer you will look like the image to the left.

Our modern-day lifestyles rarely allow the diversity and frequency of movement that maintains this balance and thus we may develop postural misalignments, such as rounded shoulders and a 'hunched' upper back.

This can cause certain muscles and joints to compensate making them more prone to injury. Often, the 'unexplained' source of many health conditions is that your body is out of alignment.

You can improve your alignment by doing a daily set of posture correction exercises that improve the balance of your muscles from left to right, and from front to back. This should help your body better cope with the demands of working/staying at home and reduce your risk of pain and injuries.

In the pages that follow are 3 exercises to help you do that. To get these exercises in video format, and for more advice on staying healthy while working/staying at home, for example on correct footwear and ideal sleeping positions, sign up to my free newsletter: healththroughposture.com/livepainfree

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Static Back

Hold for 5-10 minutes



Instructions:

1. Lie on your back with your legs up over a chair, the bed or a sofa.
2. Have your knees at hip-width apart initially and at right angles.
3. Place your arms at 45 degrees from your body with palms up.
4. Relax your entire body including the hips (even if this causes your legs to fall out a little).
5. Take deep and comfortable breaths into your abdomen (rather than the chest).

Notes:

- If your neck is uncomfortable/painful in this position, then place one or more folded towels under your head. After 5 minutes, see if you can remove one towel, and keep repeating until you have no more towels and your head gets down to the floor comfortably. This may take one session of 10-20 minutes or many days/weeks of doing this exercise daily until the upper back and neck are ready to have the head comfortably on the floor.

Air Bench

Build up to 2 minutes



Instructions:

1. Stand back against a wall, feet hip-width apart and pointing straight ahead.
2. Slowly walk your feet away and slide your body down the wall.
3. Stop when your hips are slightly above your knees (almost 90 degrees), and your feet are slightly in front of your hips.
4. Push your **lower** back to the wall so there's no gap between the wall and your back.
5. Hold for 2 minutes.

Notes:

- To prevent your feet slipping, wear trainers where necessary.
- Don't force your shoulders and head to touch the wall – keep the upper body relaxed.
- If you feel pain in the knees slide a little up the wall and see if this helps.

Standing Elbow Curls

25 reps



Instructions:

1. Stand against a wall (optional), with your feet hip-width apart pointing straight ahead.
2. The back of your feet, buttocks, upper back and head should touch the wall but don't force the head back if it feels uncomfortable.
3. Tuck your fingertips into the pads of your hands and place your hands by your temple.
4. Pull your elbows back to touch the wall and then bring them together in front of your face.
5. Repeat 25 times.

Notes:

- Keep the shoulders relaxed throughout.
- It's normal for your lower back to be arched and away from the wall.
- If your elbows can't touch each other or the wall at first don't force them, over time this should improve.
- Only have your head touching the wall if it feels comfortable.