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Ergonomics and Staying Injury-Free

By Colleen Crawford

The shift to working from home for many of us has been filled with many varied challenges, including how to set up an effective workspace that allows us to work productively and safely. Without the benefit of furniture and accessories designed with workspace safety in mind, we have been left piecing together workspaces in spare corners of our homes while repurposing household items to create the best work environment we can.

[EHS Today](#) provides guidance on how to implement ergonomics basics while working remotely to help us work safely and reduce the risk of injury using the acronym **NEW:**

N - Neutral Posture: Attain a proper posture while performing sitting or standing work; a neutral seated posture should include sitting with the neck straight, shoulders straight down loosely at the sides, elbows at a right angle, wrists straight, low back supported on the back rest of the chair, 90° at the hips, 90° at the knees, and feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.

E - Eye and Elbow Height: Whether seated and standing - ensure that the keyboard (ASDF home row) and mouse are positioned at the elbow level. The top of the monitor should be at or slightly below eye height.

W - Work Area: Keep items that are used often in the primary work zone (the area when elbows are at the sides and the hands are moved side to side, see figure); keep items that are used less often in the secondary work zone (area within the outstretched arms). In the office, the keyboard and mouse should be in the primary work zone, centered with the user and the monitors.

Additional details for how to achieve proper ergonomics while working, including DIY suggestions for your home workspace, can be found in the EHS Today article [Ergonomics Recommendations for Remote Work](#).

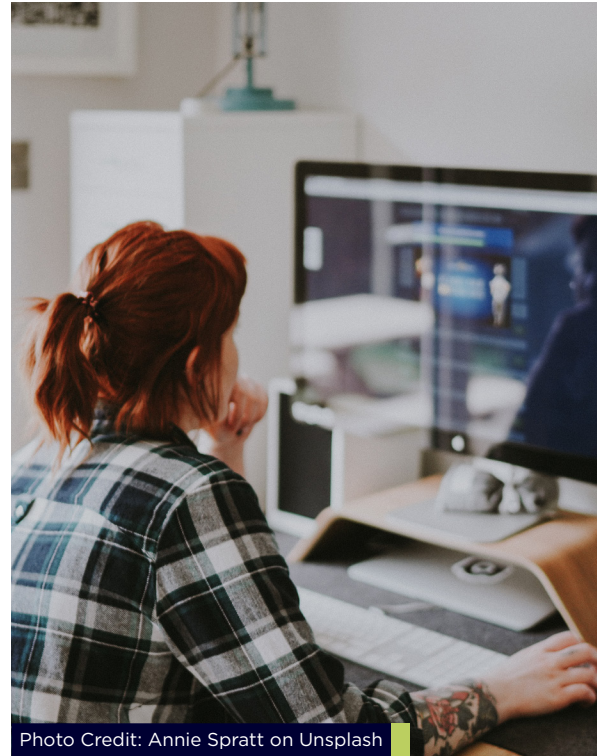


Photo Credit: Annie Spratt on Unsplash

Staying injury-free doesn't stop with your workstation setup. Including movement throughout your workday can help relieve tension in overworked muscles and provide an opportunity to bring balance into your body. Taking a few minutes several times per day to move around can be enough to reset posture so you don't settle into a suboptimal, and potentially injury-inducing, position for extended lengths of time. You don't have to commit to a structured exercise routine to reap the benefits of adding movement breaks to your day. A few laps around your home (inside or out), trips up and down your stairs, and simple stretches while looking out your window are all actions you can take today to help keep your body pain-free. Or if you have 14 minutes to spare, give this standing sequence [Office Break Yoga](#) a try! ■