

## Physical Health in times of Covid-19

### Working from home advice:

As a large proportion of us are now working from home it is doubtful that you can precisely replicate your office working set up at home. Some of us may have access to a home office or desk, but I suspect many are working off the kitchen/dining table, or possibly on our laps!?

So what can you do to make sure you are supporting your musculoskeletal health when working?

Most obviously is to make sure that you are getting up regularly, at least 5 minutes every hour and taking a half hour lunch, where you could go out for your daily exercise, or at least have a walk around the garden if you have one. If you have limited space then at least undertake stretches you can find here to improve your comfort:

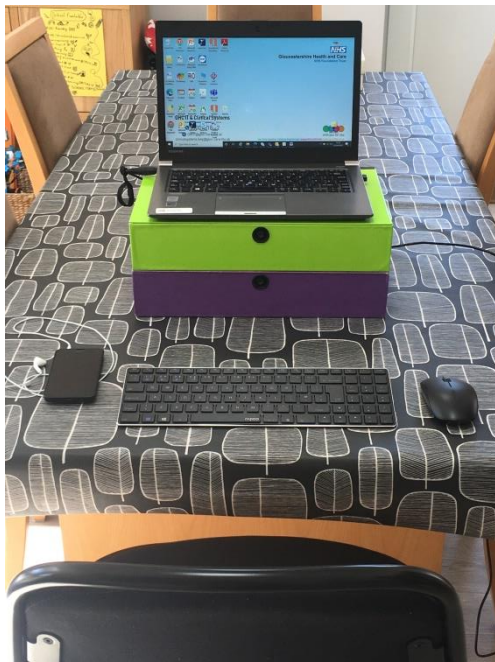
<https://www.workingwellglos.nhs.uk/health-wellbeing/musculoskeletal-help-and-advice/>

Working off a laptop on a table/desk is not ideal for our musculoskeletal health; here are some tips to improve your position:

- 1) Use a separate keyboard and mouse, this will allow you to raise the screen to a better height at eye level on a laptop stand or if one is not available in the short term you can use books. Discuss with your manager provision of equipment if required.

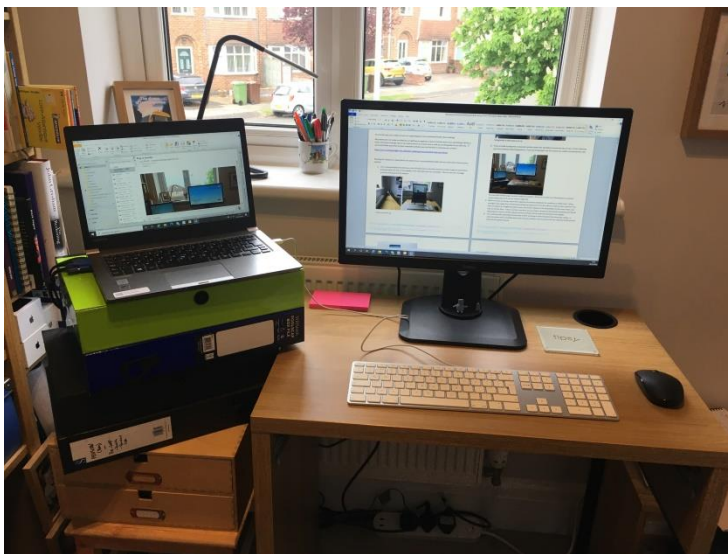


Laptop stand set up



Using books or alternative set up

- 2) If you are able to plug into a separate monitor screen this will likely increase the size of your screen reducing eye strain and also improving posture. If you are straining to see the screen you could increase the font size.



You can work off the larger screen to improve comfort. You can then use your laptop as a second screen if required, but make sure that you move it from side to side regularly (maybe every other day) to reduce neck strain.

- 3) Make sure you are using a chair that supports your back and ideally this would be an office chair. Many managers are supportive of individuals picking up equipment from the office to improve their comfort. The chair should be at a height that allows your arms to be relaxed on the desk/table, but this may mean your feet are off the floor. If this is not the case then you can make a temporary footrest by stacking some books allowing your feet to rest flat and your knees and hips to be at approximately the same height.

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- 4) You could consider spending short periods of time standing to work instead of the whole day sitting. In order to achieve this it would be best to use a sit/stand platform on your desk/dining table, such as this: <https://sit-stand.com/sit-stand-converter/124-yo-yo-desk-120.html> you may already have access to one at work. If this is not available to you at this time then you could consider working off a kitchen worksurface using books or folders to raise the height of your screen in a similar way to when sitting:



There is evidence that spending short periods of time standing instead of sitting can improve our comfort, but the most important thing is that you regularly adjust your position. If you are taller then you may find you need to raise your keyboard on books to so you are not bending to reach for the keys.

## Keeping Active:

It is very difficult for individuals to complete their normal exercise activities as gyms and swimming pools have closed, team sports are not allowed and even going out for a walk is off limits for some individuals. So what resources are out there for us to remain physically healthy in this current pandemic?

The national guidance is that we should be undertaking 150 minutes of moderate activity over 5 days of the week to maintain cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health. So what does moderate activity look like? You should feel your heart rate rise and be hotter than normal. A good test is whether you are able to still talk, but you should not be able to sing! Examples of the type of exercise classed in this bracket are, brisk walking, riding a bike, dancing, pushing a lawnmower! Whilst it is unlikely that you will be able to fulfil the recommended hours with the current restrictions, anything is much better than nothing!

If you are active and working your cardiovascular system then this will have a secondary benefit of maintaining your respiratory health, very useful at a time like this. Exercise also has great links to improving your emotional wellbeing and stress busting, great for all as we get used to current restrictions on our lives.

So while we can still go out walking and cycling this should be encouraged, what other options are there in terms of exercise?

Marching on the spot, maybe to some of your favourite tunes, walking up and down the stairs, playing a game of tag with the children (or grown-ups!).

Resources with evidence based exercise regimes you could try:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/> - a series of videos which gives lots of options in terms of strength and cardiovascular exercise.

Joe Wicks is undertaking PE aimed at children on his YouTube channel daily, live at 9am, but available all day. Many parents have been joining in, from my own experience it is great fun, but can lead to some stiffness the following day!!!

Track your walking with the Active 10 app which helps to record your progress and goals.

If you fancy a real challenge and can get out then maybe try the couch to 5km challenge.

Sport England has also put together some resources which you might find helpful both free and subscriptions ranging from Disney workouts with the kids to HIT, Yoga and pilates:

[https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout?goal=0\\_5e7db34ec6-35b6129db6-91097857&mc\\_cid=35b6129db6&mc\\_eid=aad1d8fbf2#get\\_active\\_at\\_home](https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout?goal=0_5e7db34ec6-35b6129db6-91097857&mc_cid=35b6129db6&mc_eid=aad1d8fbf2#get_active_at_home)

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