

Ergonomics

How to work from home

Covid-19 has forced many organisations throughout the world to explore working from home (WFH) in order for business to continue and in most cases, survive.

For some organisations, working from home will be familiar territory and they are the ones that will find it easier to adapt to instructing workers to work from home. For other organisations, working from home will be a completely new concept and they may struggle, certainly in the immediate period, to adapt. Whether working on site or working from home, organisations still have a duty of care to ensure risks to their workers are properly managed. Below is advice and guidance aimed to help organisations temporarily adapt to a remote working situation during these challenging times.

Self-assessment

When employing a new workstation, a risk assessment should be conducted. Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments are generally a self-assessment and due to rapid spread of Covid-19 and government restrictions, it is not be practical for DSE assessments to be carried out face-to-face. Therefore, a self-assessment is appropriate.

A self-assessment checklist or questionnaire is an effective way to assess risks and can be completed by employees in their new working environments. When designing a checklist, questions should confirm whether the layout of the workstation is suitable for the worker's mental health and physical health and identify any additional needs.

Given the certain circumstances and restrictions imposed on organisations due to the spread of Covid-19, getting

additional necessary equipment to workers may be challenging; therefore, organisations should provide workers with advice on how to modify workstations with equipment they may have in the house to ensure worker safety. Self-assessments should also ensure workers are being compliant with any specific organisational policy and procedures.

Ergonomic arrangements

Due to the escalated government measures globally, the requirements to self-isolate or work from home were accelerated and a lot of organisations will not have been prepared to set their workers up to work remotely.

Organisations that were not prepared for remote working may find that workers may not have access to a desk or the appropriate workspace that they would be usually accustomed to at work. Workers who are not fully equipped for home working should be sent necessary equipment if safe to do so or provided with advice on how to modify their workstation temporarily or provided with other instruction and advice about what the worker should do if they do not have this equipment.

Display screen equipment (DSE)

Workers who are now unexpectedly having to work from home may not be able to eliminate the risks completely. Although this is a temporary measure, organisations and workers must do what is realistic and practical as not all organisations will purchase office equipment for their workers.

The important thing is that organisations collaborate with workers on how to work safely to reduce the risks by ensuring workers know how to spot the risks and are making sure any safety, health and wellbeing controls are practical and are being carried out.



How can I create a temporary workstation if I don't have the necessary equipment?

Should you not have access to sufficient equipment, you could try modifying your workstation using household equipment by:

- ✓ Using items such as books or boxes to raise a laptop to eye level.
- ✓ Using items such as a box as a leg/foot support.
- ✓ Using a kitchen worktop to create a standing workstation.
- ✓ Using a flat surface such as a dinner tray to sit a laptop, if there is no access to a table.
- ✓ Clearing a workspace to ensure there is enough space around you to enable you to work effectively.



How do I ensure that I am not putting myself at risk of an MSD?

Create a routine that suits your workload. Have you tried:

- ✓ Doing work in short bites.
- ✓ Taking regular breaks.
- ✓ Alternating the type of work, you are doing – Screen work, phone calls, reading.
- ✓ Stretching exercises.
- ✓ Avoiding eye fatigue by blinking from time to time.
- ✓ Changing positions – avoiding static postures.

For more information visit www.iosh.com/coronavirus-ergonomics-of-working

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