

Ergonomic Adjustments you can make at home to help while tele-commuting:

Sitting does, in fact, do some crazy stuff to your body: It causes your hip flexors to contract and shorten, which can lead to chronic aches, numbness, and tension. Sitting on one crossed leg, or bracing your ankles on the base of your chair, can hurt your knees and ankles. Slouching at your desk puts pressure on your spine, specifically your discs. This tension can make you scrunch your shoulders up around your ears, leading to stiff necks and muscle spasms. Standing all day is likewise not ideal! All of this equals a throbbing lower back that makes you feel like you aged fifty years in one day. But don't despair, there are things we can do to help us adjust to working from home with household items.

Desktop- You want to have your eyeline from the top of your monitor to your eyes in almost direct alignment, if you find your computer screen is lower, stack computer paper or books under your screen to raise it to the proper height. If you are using a laptop you can just raise the back of the monitor then adjust the tilt of the screen for proper viewing. If you are sitting in your favorite chair try a pillow on your lap, so your view of your monitor is aligned for proper viewing, no tilting of the neck up or down, shoulders relaxed.

Chair- Be sure to support your lumbar area, a lower back pillow or cushion can go a long way in providing needed comfort to ease lower back pain. If a pillow won't work try rolling a towel to place behind you in the small of your back, it may take some time to find that perfect spot, but don't give up, maybe a combination of both pillow and rolled towel will work for you. Some people put a pillow on the seat of their chair too for more comfort and to raise them up higher, find your comfort zone.

Feet- Placement of your feet also can help or hurt the lower back. If you are sitting at a desk or a table you want to make sure your feet are firmly on the floor. We don't want your feet wrapped around one of your ankles, a leg folded under your butt on a chair either. These put your spine out of alignment and cause low back pain as well. If your feet don't reach the floor squarely, try putting a box, a stepstool or textbooks under the desk or table for your feet to rest on evenly. If your issue is your feet are evenly on the floor it's the desk or table that is too short, then try raising the height of the desk or table (some people have used wood blocks or paver stones). Try using an ironing board as your desk this gives you some height versatility, or maybe switch between standing and sitting, using the kitchen table, kitchen counter, card table or picnic table.

Posture- It's crucial that you vary your posture throughout the day, because sitting in the same position or in a chair all day can lead to back, neck and shoulder pain. You might start your day at your kitchen table, then transition to a standing position or sit on your soft couch. It's best to alternate every hour or so.

Take Breaks- It's very important to remember to take little breaks throughout the day, stand up and stretch your legs, or sit down and elevate your feet to increase your circulation. We tend to stay focused on work so much we forget time and that can hurt you in the long run when you try to stand up after sitting in front of your computer for hours at a time. Set an alarm to go off every 30-45 mins. and stretch either in your chair or stand and stretch your legs, back, wrists and arms. It will help your circulation and keep your muscles from tightening up due to staying in the same position for hours.

Keyboard- You want to maintain relaxed shoulders and a 90-degree bend between your shoulders and elbows, while still feeling comfortable while typing on your keyboard. Your wrists should rest gently on the desk or table. If you aren't comfortable with your wrists on the desk or table there are some tricks to help you if you don't have a wrist rest. You can try a rolled towel or a soft pair of socks. Other people have found relief with a sock full of rice which provides a soft, moldable wrist rest. You can pop it in the microwave for 30 seconds and now it's a heated wrist rest (remember to test the temperature before initial use)

You may also try to elevate your laptop high with books or a ream of paper on the very back, then tilt your screen for proper eyeline alignment, this allows you to tilt your keyboard down, helps your wrists to gently rest on the lower portion of your laptop giving you a semi-raised keyboard position which could possibly put your shoulder and elbows into a 90-degree position if you can't achieve it in other ways.

All of these are tips to try and help you achieve a closer ergonomic work station. Some may help in certain ways but not in others, it's not a perfect science when we are asked to work from home during this current worldwide situation with what we have. All we can do is the best we can with what we have currently, trial and error in some ways. If you are experiencing a different issue let me know and I will scour the internet looking for ways to address your particular issue.