

ACPOHE

PHYSIOS **FOR** WORK **AND** HEALTH

ADVICE DOCUMENT

HOME WORKING DURING COVID-19

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Background

This advice sheet has been developed by ACPOHE to help its members to provide support to employees and employers following mandatory home working due to the COVID 19 crisis.

During such temporary home working arrangements due to crisis the HSE states that there is **not** a requirement to complete a full DSE risk assessment.

Current advice from the HSE can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm> and a risk assessment checklist at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf> if a formal risk assessment is deemed helpful.

This leaflet provides further support on how to keep physically and mentally healthy during these unusual times.

A Reminder!

Coronavirus is dangerous. You need to follow government advice and take all necessary steps to minimize transmission and protect the vulnerable. Use Trusted websites, such as 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): UK government response,' 'WHO' and 'NHS UK.' There is some fake news on social media.

Get facts, not rumours

Create a Daily Routine

- Where possible **have a clear start and end time** otherwise you may feel like you are working 24/7 which may lead to increased stress. When you need to be more agile with your work hours avoid 'work creep.' Put your laptop away when not working and have structured time for family , especially when the family is also at home
- **Keep to your existing routine** - get up on time, get dressed, eat breakfast, anything you would usually do. Keep boundaries between your work and home life
- **Don't undertake big chores such as cooking or DIY during the workday.** Schedule these chores outside of your working hours or in the time you would normally spend commuting. Small bits of housework such as loading the dishwasher will help you to vary your posture but be careful not to lose sight of your work tasks and focus
- If possible, **choose a specific room or environment as your workspace** and stick to this for most of your work. Sometimes you may find that working from a different work area enables you to vary your posture. This is only advised if you have the space and can keep work focused!
- **Remember to schedule a time for breaks.** Little and often is ideal – break before the onset of discomfort to keep your body protected from posture related problems. Use your phone, smart watch or calendar to set reminders for frequent breaks
- **Wind down at the end of your workday.** Taking time to 'decompress' is instrumental for stress relief. Reading, meditating, exercise? Do what it takes to work for you

Look after Your Body – ‘Move it’

‘Your best posture is your next posture’

Fidget, stretch, stand up to take phone calls, move around, sit to stand 10 times every hour. Movement is the key to reducing postural aches and pains. If your day allows, leave the house and go outdoors. Exercise naturally boosts endorphins, which increases happiness, enjoyment, and interest levels - all of which are important for mental and physical health and productivity

Make use of the numerous online activity resources. Here are a couple of websites packed full of videos on various exercises for every level of fitness and individual preference.



<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>



<https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout>

So, what are you waiting for.....get moving!

Set up your workstation as best you can

Don't worry if you cannot set your workstation in the same way as you do in the office. Most aches will be temporary so to listen to your body – it will tell you when it is time to move.

The following tips may help:

- Use books to raise your laptop when working with additional mouse and keyboard
- Sit on cushions if needed to raise up your height
- Try using a box or piece of wood as a footrest, if needed
- Add a rolled-up towel or small cushion behind your back
- Increase the 'screen view size' on your laptop, i.e. over 100%

Look after Your Body-Sleep Hygiene

Achieving **quality sleep** is extremely important for physical/mental health and well-being, especially during difficult times:

- Get up at the same time each day (bedtime is then dictated by your level of tiredness)
- Avoid phones, tablets and computers for at least one hour before sleep
- Exercise outside each day
- Keep bedroom well ventilated and do not over-heat at night

Look after Your Body-Eat and Drink Healthily

- Although you have full access to the kitchen, try to avoid high sugar snacks. You have more time to prepare a proper healthy meal or snack and make sure you drink enough fluids. Getting up to prepare a hot drink is also a good moment for exercise

Be aware of impact on your Mental Well-Being

- **Stay social** –regular communications over telephone or networking sites such as MS Teams, Zoom, Skype helps to alleviate feelings of isolation. Use of video conferencing really supports human interactivity and should be encouraged. Managers should be encouraged to set up regular team communications, ideally at a set time each day, to encourage personal interaction and support
- **BUT don't spend all your time checking your phone, watching, reading or listening to news for updates.** That just generates anxiety and worry. Try to limit yourself to seeking updates at planned times, once or twice a day
- **Stay on top of any difficult feelings.** It is quite normal to feel anxious during a crisis when your life has been turned upside down. Focus on any positive outcomes and talk to trusted family and friends about your feelings
- **Allow yourself breaks** and make sure to give yourself 'rewards' after working hard

- **Take time to unwind** – do whatever helps you to ‘chill out’ and relax. If you find you have more time than usual, use it for things you find meaningful. Maybe read that book or watch a film you wanted to get into
- **Support your colleagues** – in particular, consider calling your extrovert colleagues more often as they may feel particularly lonely
- **Have some background noise** - Studies have shown that listening to soft, classical music or having the radio on whilst you work can help improve focus
- **Use available online resources** such as Employee Assistance Programmes, remote support from Occupational Health or other (see list in Appendix of reputable websites)

Seek help when needed

If you are struggling with either your physical or mental health ensure you **reach out for professional help**. You may wish to discuss this with your line manager, as they can often help and refer you to Occupational Health. The sooner you ask for support the easier it is to help resolve your health issue.

ACPOHE wish you all the best and hope you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy during these very extraordinary times.

Don't forgetkeep moving

Links for Mental Health Support

Anxiety UK

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/blog/health-and-other-forms-of-anxiety-andcoronavirus/>

BABCP Covid-19 Anxiety Blog <http://letstalkaboutcbt.libsyn.com/coping-withanxiety-about-coronavirus>

Blurt it Out

<https://www.blurtitout.org/2017/05/23/a-z-self-care/>

Calm Harm

<https://calmharm.co.uk/>

Every Mind Matters

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Living Life to the Full

<https://lltff.com/>

Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>

Mood Gym

<https://moodgym.com.au/>

NHS Mental Health Apps

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>

OCD UK

<https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-top-tips/>

World Health Organization

https://www.who.int/docs/defaultsource/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8

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