

# ASEBP Ergonomics Checklist for Home or Work



Proper ergonomics are crucial for ensuring a comfortable and safe work environment, which is why we've compiled this checklist to help you improve your home workstation setup. While you might not use all of these suggestions, even a few small changes can add up to a big difference!

## ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure that there's adequate lighting for your eyes to comfortably work and adjust if necessary.
- Check that the sound level is adequate for you to comfortably work and adjust if necessary. If you wear earbuds, try not to wear them all day as this can cause ear fatigue and eventual damage.
- Give yourself room to work by freeing your workstation of unnecessary clutter. Put up some pictures or décor, or place some houseplants nearby to brighten your space. Studies show that having plants around makes people feel happy and well.
- No one is meant to stay in one place for extended periods! Try shifting your position regularly using these tips:
  - ◇ Get up and [stretch](#) for two to five minutes every hour. Try standing meetings if you can.
  - ◇ Take lunch breaks away from the computer—try going for a quick walk, interacting with others, or completing an exercise routine.

## COMPUTER SCREEN AND DESKTOP

- Ensure your computer screen is an arm's length away from your eyes. If you find yourself leaning forward to see it, [increase your screen's zoom](#) or adjust your font size.
- Ideally, the top of your screen should be two to four centimeters above eye level. This is because most people work by looking at the bottom two-thirds of their screen and, ideally, your head should rest neutrally on top of your spine.
  - ◇ If you wear bifocals, keep your screen lower than noted above so you can see even without having to keep your chin up.
  - ◇ If you're working on a laptop and have a separate keyboard, use what you have available (e.g. a stack of books or a book holder) to raise your laptop to the proper height—this helps keep the screen at eye level!
- Center your computer screen with your nose (or screens if you're using more than one monitor).
- Place work documents and your phone on the opposite side of your computer's mouse to ensure you're using both hands throughout the day. This is especially important for teleworkers!

# WORKSTATION AND CHAIR

- If you can, use a comfortable chair with a back rest. Rest lightly into the chair and allow the back rest to support some of your upper body weight.
  - ◇ Ideally, your chair height should keep the angles of your elbows, the front of your hips, the backs of your knees, and the fronts of your ankles somewhere between roughly 90 and 120 degrees.
  - ◇ If your feet don't reach the floor, try to keep your feet and heels supported in some way or use a footrest. It's okay to shift your feet around as you sit.
  - ◇ If you're using a computer chair, ensure the arm rests are the same height as your desk, and adjust the seat so there are three to five centimeters between the backs of your knees and the edge of your seat.
- Don't rest your wrists on the edge of your keyboard or desk. This creates angular pressure that can lead to a chronic injury called carpal tunnel syndrome. Raise your chair or armrests so your elbows are level with your work surface to help avoid this added pressure on the wrists.
- If your chair has adjustable arm rests, ensure they're set up so your elbows can rest comfortably on them. If it doesn't have arm rests, adjust your chair or desk so your elbows sit comfortably on your work surface. Your shoulders should be back and relaxed, not hunched or rounded.
  - ◇ Ensure your shoulders aren't up at your ears or drooping down: your shoulder blades should rest comfortably together in the middle of your back when your arms are in front of you.
  - ◇ Try to sit with your elbows close to your ribcage, rather than extended to the sides, so your shoulders aren't hunched. This will help avoid upper back soreness and pinched nerves.
- Sit-stand desks are great if you have one! If you don't, get creative by using a raised surface in your house to alternate from your seated workstation. Keep in mind, though, that using a computer while standing does require some different adjustments:
  - ◇ Ensure your keyboard/work surface is around elbow height.
  - ◇ When you're standing, your screen should be slightly lower in relation to your eye level than when seated. Follow the directions above for setting up your screen when you're seated, then lower it by two to four centimeters for a good standing setup.
  - ◇ If you're standing for awhile, go barefoot if at home or wear supportive shoes at the office, as opposed to wearing dress shoes or high heels. Allow yourself to move around when you become uncomfortable. And don't stand all day either—a variety of positions is healthiest!



## BE ACTIVE AND LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

- Remember that while there's good posture, there isn't perfect posture. Do what's right for you, based on your activity level, office setup and lifestyle.
- Being active is important. Exercise regularly and engage in a variety of activities to keep you mobile, like yoga or stretching. Doing this regularly will help minimize aches and pains.
  - ◇ Adults are recommended to have more than [150 minutes of vigorous activity per week](#), ideally with a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercises. That's in addition to light physical activity on a normal basis, so we avoid too much sitting.
  - ◇ [Using a foam roller or ball](#) to roll out sore muscles can help with muscular tightness. For best results, roll for 20 to 30 seconds—you should feel some mild discomfort.
  - ◇ If you feel restless, get up and move! Our bodies have a reflex to move so we maintain blood flow when we've been still for too long.
- If you have any musculoskeletal or neuromuscular conditions, consult your physiotherapist and/or physician so you can modify your workstation for your body's needs.
- If you're pregnant, you should consult your physician about any discomfort you feel. Here are some quick tips for when you're working while seated for extended periods:
  - ◇ You could benefit from having additional lumbar support, such as a pillow or lumbar rest.
  - ◇ Footrests can help with lower-body posture and alleviate some joint soreness and swelling.
  - ◇ Working while occasionally sitting on a balance ball can help with lower-back stiffness.
  - ◇ You may need to adjust your chair and workstation as your pregnancy progresses.
  - ◇ Consult your physician and read the [Canadian guidelines for physical activity](#) throughout your pregnancy.
- For more information, check out [this resource](#) from the Workers' Compensation Board or this [free short e-course](#) from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety.

