Washington State Department of Labor & Industries
Division of Occupational Safety and Health

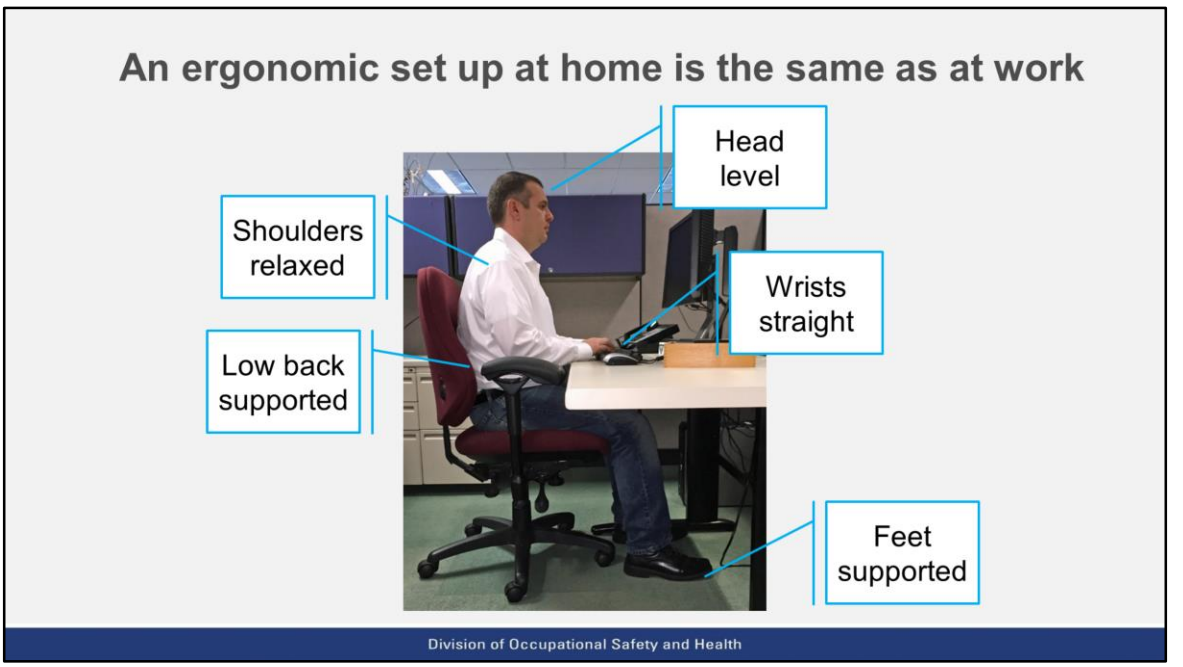
Keep Washington safe and working

# Ergonomics for teleworkers

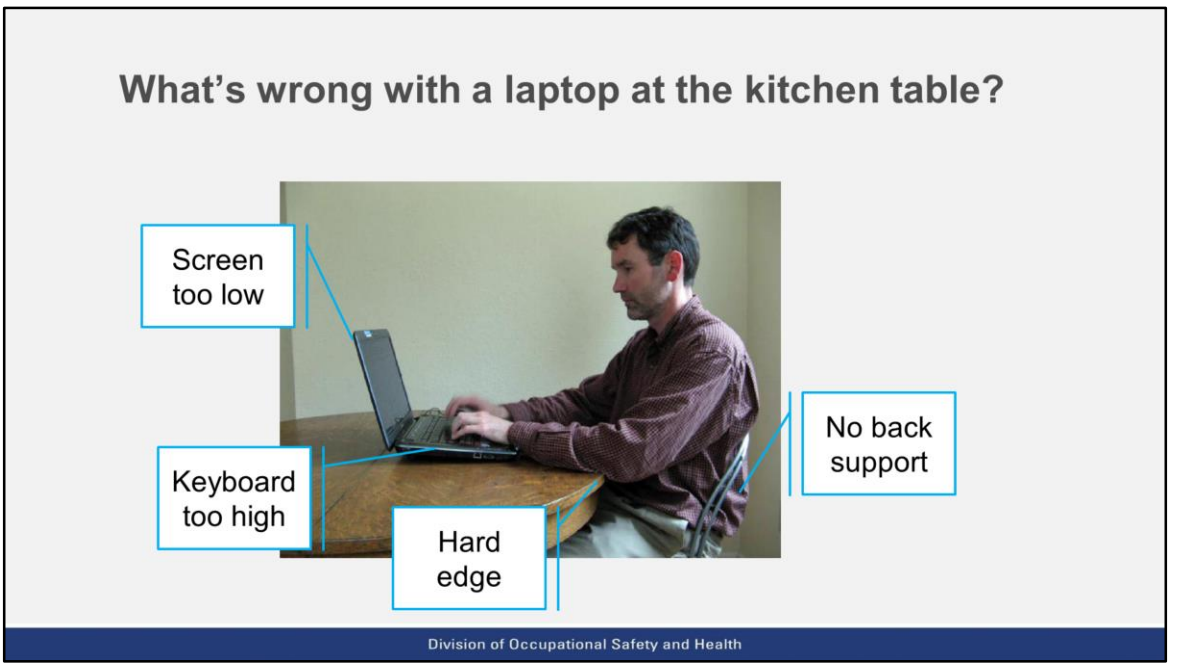
*Getting comfortable in your home office*

## Objectives

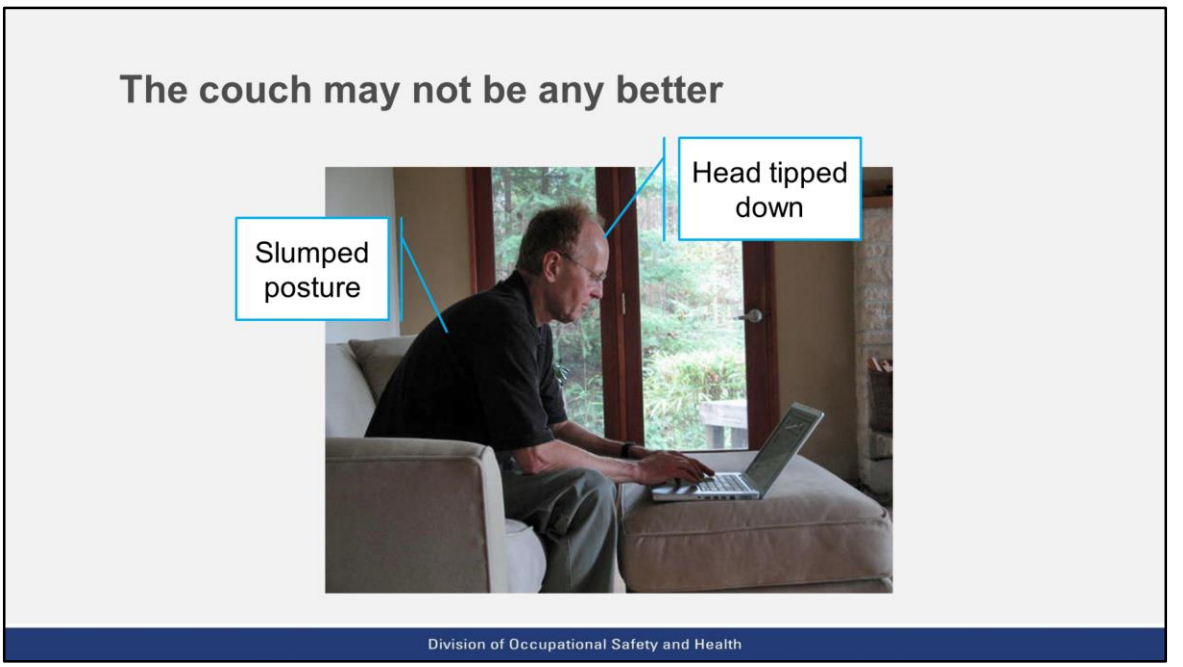
- Set up a home office for comfort and productivity.
- Try out options to sitting at a desk in order to vary your posture.
- Use healthy habits for wellness when working at home.



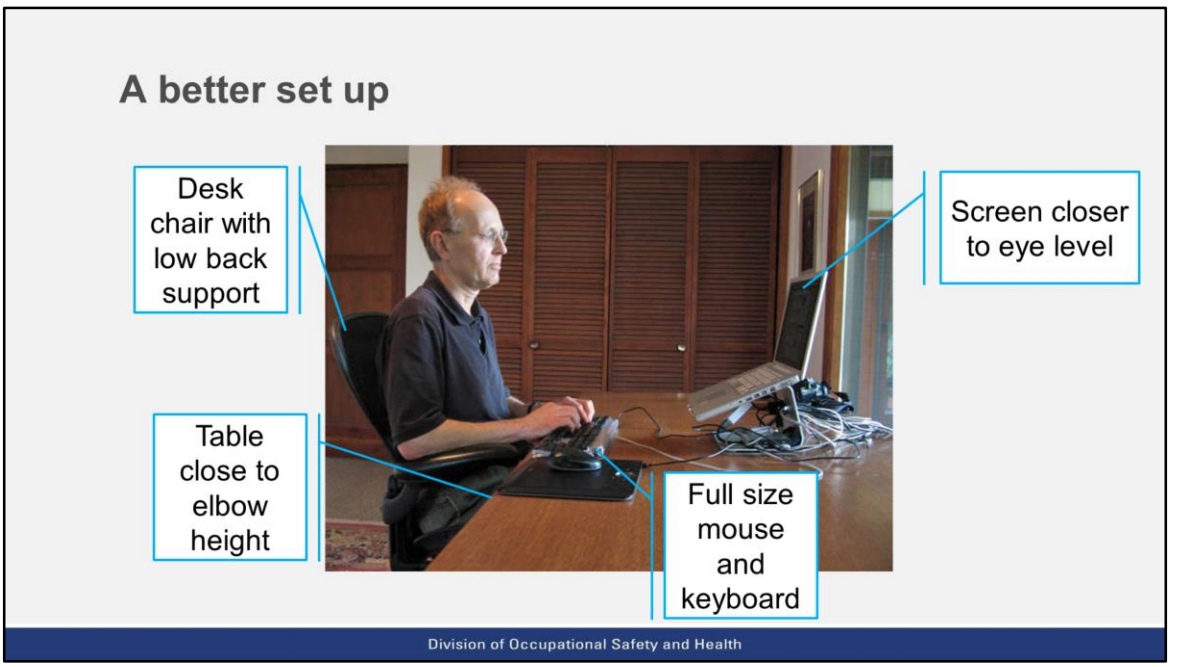

You may not have all of the same equipment at home, but you should work with what you have to get into a good working posture.




The kitchen table might be okay for a little while, but it will get very uncomfortable if you work there too long.

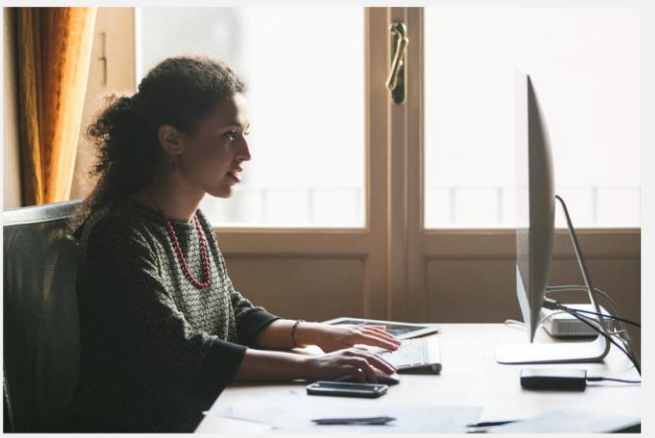



Sitting on a softer surface can help, but only if you can get your computer into a good position.




Simple fixes include plugging in a keyboard and mouse, and placing the laptop on a stand to get the screen to a better height. If you don't have a good desk chair, you can use cushions to make the seat and back of a kitchen chair more comfortable. If the only tables you have are above your elbow height, you can raise your chair, or add cushions to the seat to get higher. You may need to use a sturdy box or something similar for foot support if your feet no longer touch the floor.

## A full-size monitor can reduce eye strain



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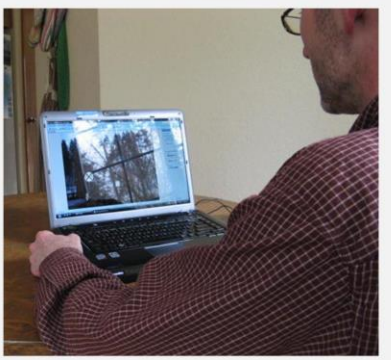
A larger screen will make it easier to see words and images. You might be able to plug in a larger external screen to your laptop. The top of the monitor screen should be about eye level. If it's too low, you can place the monitor on some books to get the screen to the right height. You can use the laptop keyboard and touchpad, but you might find it more comfortable to use a separate keyboard and mouse. If you want to use your laptop as a second screen, you should raise it up to the same level as the monitor to avoid bending your neck.

## Avoid glare by positioning your screen away from windows



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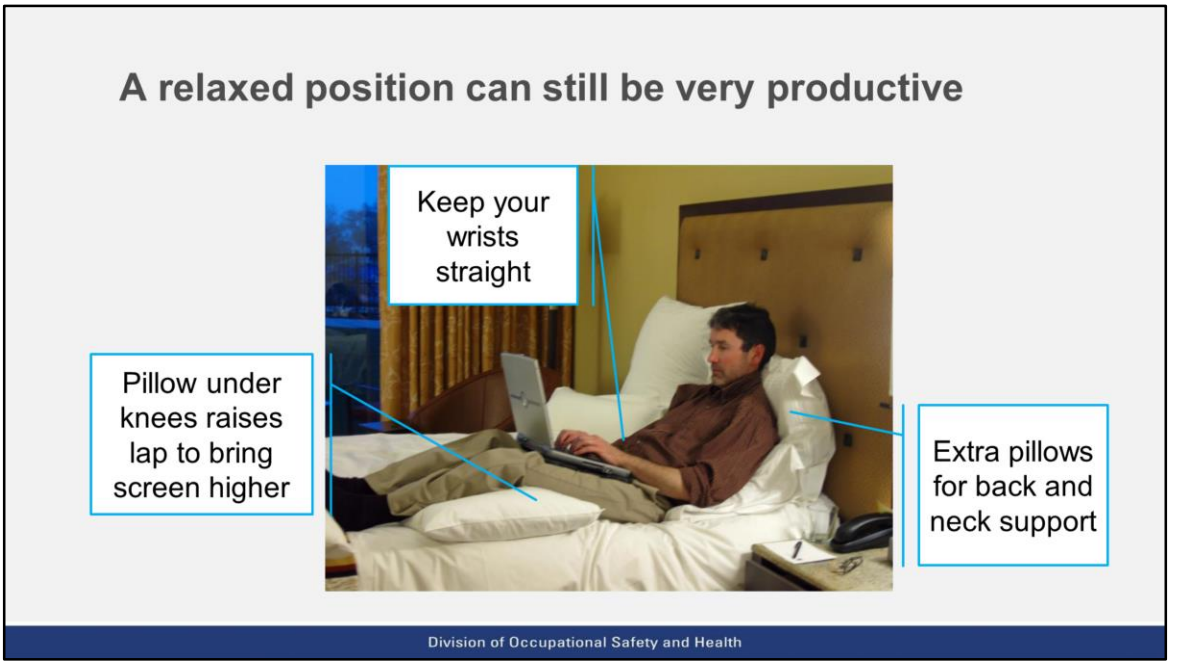
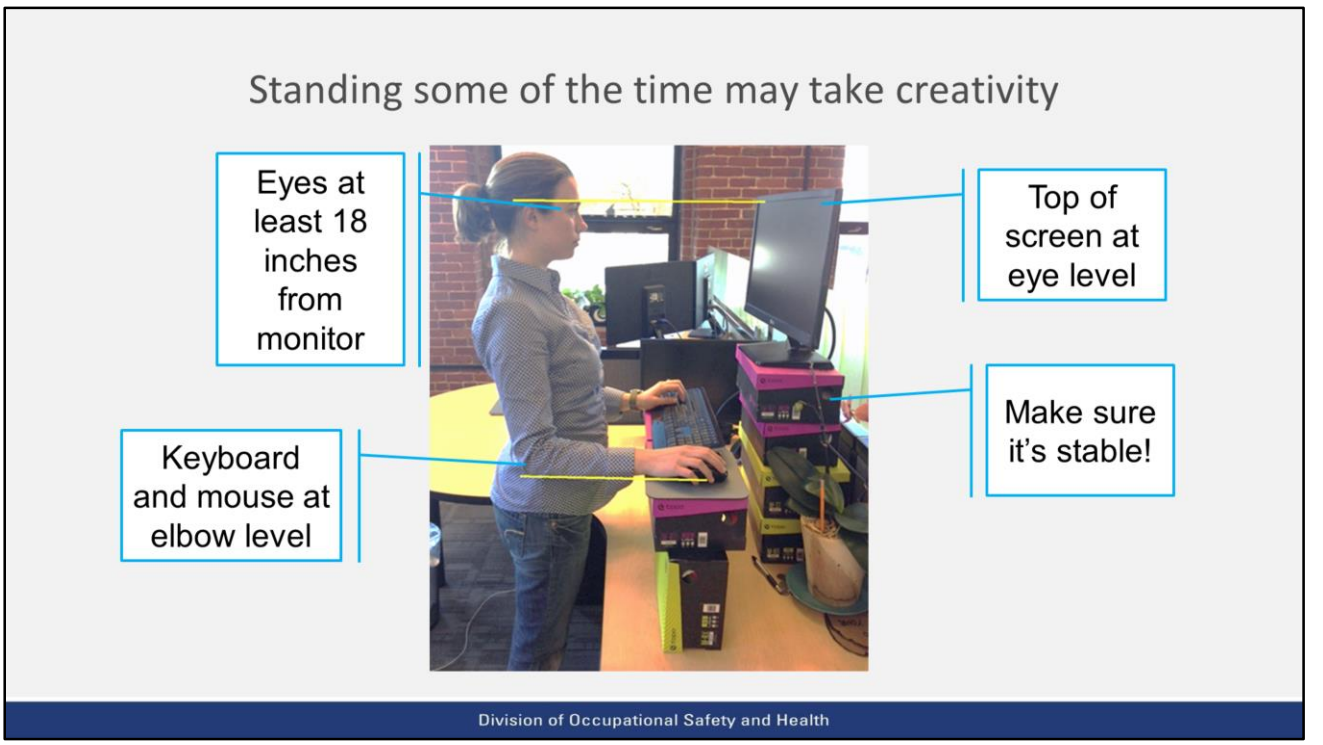
You can get eye strain if you sit facing a bright window or with a bright light directly behind you. Sit sideways to bright light sources. If glare is a problem, close the blinds or curtains.

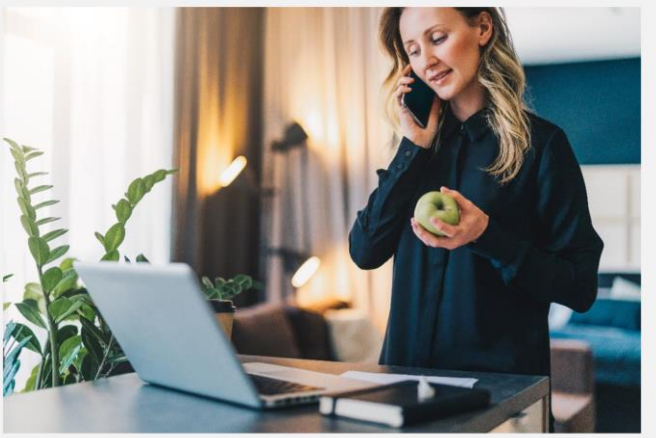



Stretching out on a bed or couch can provide a break from sitting at a desk. But don't get too comfortable! Even a relaxed position should be changed every hour or so.




Standing also makes for a good break from sitting. If you don't have a standing desk at home, you might be able to find a creative way to raise the keyboard, mouse and monitor. Just make sure to stay safe and place everything on stable surfaces.

## Try to stand when not using the computer



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If you can’t stand up when you’re using the computer, you might still be able to stand when talking on the phone, or working with papers.

## A headset can help with head and neck posture

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Rather than holding a phone up to your ear, plugging in a headset or using the earbuds can help you keep your neck and shoulders relaxed. Headsets are also very helpful for online meetings or webinars.

## Healthy habits

- Change position often
- Take a short break every hour or so
- Go for a walk on longer breaks

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No one position is likely to be comfortable enough to work in all day. You may have fewer interruptions when working at home, so you'll need to remind yourself to change positions periodically. If you find that you get caught up in your work and aren't moving enough, you can set reminders in your online calendar or on your phone. Take a short break as you change positions, and stretch or get something to drink. Get outside if you can during longer breaks, and go for a walk to get your heart pumping and to loosen up your muscles.