

WORK LIFE

Healthy WFH habits

Hybrid is the new normal for many workers, so it's essential to get the home office set-up just right.

Words **LUKE DENNEHY**

Working from home is here to stay. Bosses have finally confirmed and enshrined a hybrid model, which many workers have come to expect and enjoy in a COVID-19 world.

This has led to experts calling for safer practices when it comes to workers' physical and mental health while working from home.

Physiotherapist Jennifer Dodge, from the group The Office Athlete, who specialises in health and wellness in the workplace, has seen it all when it comes to bad work-from-home set-ups.

This includes Zoom meetings from bedrooms or sitting at the dining table with a chair not designed for hours of meetings, or working from a comfy leather couch that was not made for working on a laptop.

There are a few things that need to be taken into consideration as we establish a new working-from-home normal.

Now is the time to get it right.

"I think using the wrong desk and sitting in a chair that does not support you whatsoever while working long hours from home are two of the most common causes of posture, back and neck pain I am seeing, especially over the past two years," Dodge says.

"Working from home also limits those incidental but important movements that we'd normally

tap into such as catching public transport, walking downstairs to get a coffee and so on, so workers really need to remind themselves to get up and move during the day while working from home to allow the body to stretch, and break up the time spent staring at a screen for long periods of time."

As well as working from an adjustable and supportive chair, Dodge also recommends setting up a computer stand for your laptop and using an external keyboard to allow a relaxed forearm resting position on your desk at home.

Clinical psychologist Dr Aileen Alegado says you need to look

"Workers really need to remind themselves to get up and move during the day while working from home to allow the body to stretch."

JENNIFER DODGE

after your mental health working from home as you would in the office.

This includes exercise, avoiding working where you sleep, having digital detoxes at night and staying connected with your colleagues. That doesn't mean online on Zoom calls or the ubiquitous Microsoft Teams.

Instead, head out for a coffee every now and then with a colleague, just like in the old days.

The big one for Alegado is separating work and home life.

"It is very important to keep clear boundaries between your work and home life otherwise we can fall prey to becoming easily distracted and ineffective in running our day-to-day," she says.

"When our brains don't have clear associations when it is time for work or time for relaxation, not only does

that affect our motivation but also our energies to make good decisions, memory and thinking. At its worst, a lack of boundaries can put us at risk for higher stress levels that can lead to depression and anxiety."

The consensus from both experts is that most employees and bigger companies are now adopting a hybrid model, with two or three days in the office, and the rest at home. ●



STOCKSY