

# The Ultimate Guide to Homeworking

By the Team at KOS  
Ergonomics



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## Introduction

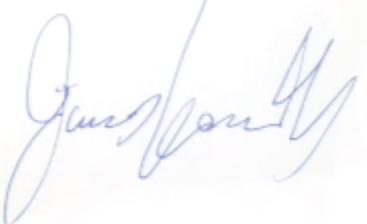
With the global pandemic that is Covid-19, there has been a sharp rise in homeworking. Although intermittent homeworking has been introduced for many companies over the last few years consistent homeworking poses some challenges. A large portion of people that haven't routinely worked remotely have now been advised to or have taken the opportunity offered to them given the current situation

If this sounds familiar, then you may have been used to an office with a comfortable workstation. Working from home can be a challenge and no one style or set of advice will work for everyone. If you have an employer or manager who can roll with the punches, you can find a style that lets you be efficient, calm, and productive while reassuring them about the quantity and quality of work you perform. If you are a manager or employer then your concern obviously lies in ensuring safe, effective and efficient working conditions for your staff.

At KOS Ergonomics we strive to help some of Ireland's largest organisations make their workplace as healthy as possible. It's looking likely that for the next while the workplace will be the kitchen table, or the makeshift office in the spare bedroom. Our multidisciplinary team along with some industry experts have put together a complete guide to help with the transition of working from home.

These next few months aren't necessarily going to be easy. However, we're all in it together. Let's get through this and find a new way forward. We hope this guide helps.

Best wishes from all the team at KOS Ergonomics!



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James Kennedy

*Senior Ergonomic Consultant*

KOS Ergonomics

## Choosing Where to Work from at Home

Author: *Lorcan Halton (BSc Physical Therapy)*

When making the transition to working from home figuring out where is the best place to set up shop can be tricky. The kitchen table may have been a reliable location for intermittent homeworking but given the increasing likelihood of a lengthy spell at home it may be best to consider a separate room. It can be tempting to get to work balancing a laptop on your knees while sprawled on a couch, working at a dining room table or kitchen counter. But creating a space for yourself that you can comfortably spend prolonged periods each day will help you maintain productivity and efficiency.



### Choosing your Work Area

When deciding on where to work from home there are a couple of aspects to consider before setting up.

- **Avoid distractions.**

Try to stay away from areas where there may be distractions. We've all seen the [BBC News reporter attempting to work from home through the invasion of his two children](#). Try to have a designated area that will, for the most part, be free from distraction. Set boundaries with your housemates or family for your working times too. Try to have an area where there is natural light and good ventilation i.e. a window that you can open. This will help circulate fresh air and keep you feeling fresh.

- **Give yourself space:**

Considering you will be using this area for multiple hours a day, it is important to have adequate space to get up and move around, as well as storing everything you need for your work tasks i.e. files, notebooks etc.

## Setting Up A Workstation at Home

Although you may be restricted to a kitchen chair and table over the next while there are ways to improve your comfort and support with some simple changes.



## Setting up Screen Height

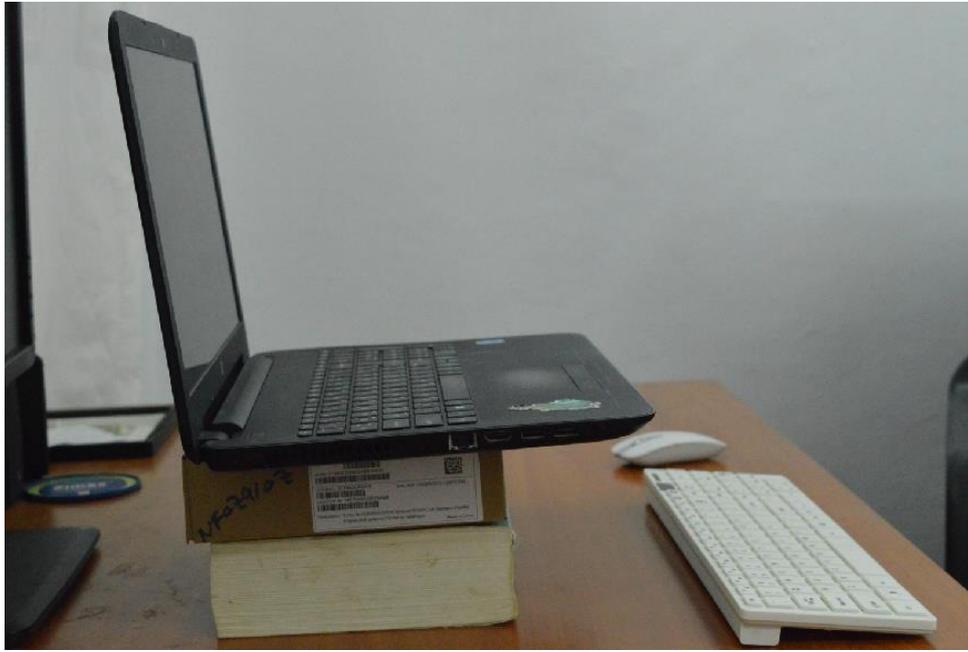
One of the main areas of concern for homeworking is monitor height. If you have a separate monitor it's a little easier. Unfortunately, many people will be restricted to using the laptop on the kitchen table over the next while, this tends to increase neck and shoulder pain from leaning forward. The average head weighs approximately 4.5kg if you tilt the head forward 15 degrees forward, this can increase the loading to 12kg of load, if we tilt it another 15 degrees forward the load has now risen from 4.5kg to 18kg of load. This is not a problem for short periods but if you are working for long periods the accumulation of additional load can cause problems.



## Working with a laptop

### DIY / Temporary / Minimal Usage

The main thing we want to do is elevate the laptop screen and push the laptop back further on the desk to allow us to sit with our head more naturally balanced, then we need a separate keyboard and mouse so we can sit back into our chair instead of leaning forward.



### Regular Usage

A laptop stand with a separate keyboard and mouse will give you more flexibility in screen angle and viewing position, so this will help you mimic your office setup better



**Incorrect**

1. The laptop screen is too close and too low.



**Incorrect**

2. The viewing distance is too far and the screen is too low.



**Incorrect**

3. Correct viewing distance, but back and neck strain.



**Correct**

4. Correct posture and viewing distance because of the K laptop stand.

## Have a monitor available

If you're lucky enough to have a monitor available, it is great. It will generally be a bigger screen, so will be easier to work with. Now we need to raise the top of the screen to about eye level to allow the head sit in balance. Again.

### DIY / Temporary / Minimal Usage:

Again, go rooting for the phone books or boxes and get that monitor raised to eye level. Be careful when stacking items and make sure to test how sturdy the books/boxes are, the last thing we want is a smashed iMac!



### Regular Usage:

If you're short on space, a monitor arm is the best solution as this will elevate your monitor to the correct working height while freeing up desk space. A monitor stand will also raise your screen while allowing the space under it to be used for storage. These solutions give better flexibility in screen positioning and also create more usable space to allow your home to be used as a home, rather than just a workspace



## Selecting the right chair for working at home

When we sit down, we naturally take a rounded posture that increases the load on the lower back, which over time increase strain and wear and tear, which can lead to back pain. When doing computer, we are reliant on the support and fit of the chair to assist our posture, so make sure you select the right chair at home for you.

### DIY / Temporary / Minimal Usage:

When you are selecting a chair for home, you want to make sure the back support is relatively upright, so it supports you when you are working on the laptop. The right size chair is also important, as you want to be able to sit back into chair comfortably without pressure on your legs. The kitchen/dining chairs tend to be most appropriate in the absence of an office chair

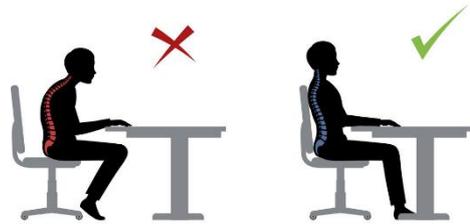
If your kitchen chair isn't supportive enough or is too deep that you can't sit back into the backrest, then you can add a rolled up towel or an inflatable/memory foam back support to the chair, this will help support a neutral curvature, maintaining an elongated 'S' shape of your spine. Alternatively, if you are having lower back pain or pressure sensitivity, introducing a seat wedge will provide a more comfortable and supportive surface while opening your hip angle which will take the pressure of your lower back.



### Regular Usage:

If the kitchen chair doesn't allow you to work in comfort it may be worthwhile reviewing ergonomic chair options for your home. If this is the case be sure to select an option that can be adjusted to your anthropometric requirements and one that will provide sufficient support when sitting for long periods. Keep the below features in mind when picking your chair.

- Height and tilt adjustable backrest - This will allow you to sit back into the chair well supported with regular light movement.
- Height Adjustable Seat – If you are sitting too low in your seat there's a closed hip angle which can encourage lower back discomfort and worsen pre-existing lower back injuries.
- Depth Adjustable Seat Pan: This may not have crossed your mind, but if your seat pan is too deep it will encourage you to sit forward and away from the back rest. This will result in lower back discomfort also.
- Height Adjustable Armrests: If your chair has armrests that are adjustable, make sure to have them parallel to your forearms when at 90 degrees. If your chair does not, make sure you sit close to table so the table can act as your armrests. Do not buy armrests if they are too deep as they will obstruct your access to the desk. Ideally the armrests will be depth adjustable so you can push them back and allow you to sit into the desk.



## Desk Selection

It's likely you'll be restricted to a kitchen or dining room table. If you're a step ahead with a desk in place, happy days! Kitchen tables are generally 76cm, where office desk heights are usually 72-74cm. This additional worksurface height may result in your elbows falling below the desk. This will result in either hunching of the shoulder while working or pressure on your forearms and wrists. Like when you're at work try to pick a workstation that when you sit into it your shoulders are relaxed and elbows are at 90 degrees. This will ensure you aren't working in a hunched position or leaning forward to unload onto the table.

*DIY / Temporary / Minimal Usage:*

If your feet are dangling, you can mimic your office footrest by piling a couple of books on the ground to place your feet on. Again, here is another time you can use the seat wedge to raise your sitting height and take the pressure of your wrists and forearm.

### Regular Usage:

Introduce a footrest to give a firm surface



### Creating a DIY Sit-Stand Desk

Having a sit-stand desk is a brilliant help in managing discomfort at home. We are not designed to sit in fixed positions and being able to vary our working position is very beneficial. If you're used to a sit-stand in the office, it may be difficult adjusting to a fixed height table at home. A great tip here is to use a bedroom dresser as your workstation.

### DIY / Temporary / Minimal Usage:

Depending on your dresser dimensions, it may be a good fit to act as your makeshift sit-stand. It will be important to raise your monitor with books or a box, so the top of the screen is at eye level and you aren't causing neck discomfort from looking down.



## Regular Usage:

If you regularly work from home and want the opportunity to work while standing, you can look at an electric sit-stand desk or a sit-stand adapter that can go on an existing table.



## Set Up Your Workspace Ergonomically

Once you have all your equipment it's important to set your workstation up ergonomically. Office Ergonomics involves making sure your workstation and your equipment fit you, rather than you contort yourself to fit your setup. Take these simple steps to set yourself up for comfort and productivity in your new work area:

- Keep your feet flat on the floor or on the pile of books/footrest if your feet are dangling.
- Sit with your hips slightly above your knees with shoulders relaxed and elbows at 90 degrees with forearms resting on the table.
- Adjust the lumbar support or towel on your chair to sit just above your waistband into your lumbar spine.
- If you have an office chair that has an adjustable tilt mechanism, adjust this to match your bodyweight. This will enable you to incorporate regular movement into your working day and take the load off your lower back.



- Keep the top of your monitor at or as close to eye level as possible. You shouldn't need to strain your neck while working.
- Place your monitor at an arm's length away from you to avoid eye strain.
- Ensure you have sufficient lighting in your workspace to avoid eye strain. It may be worth grabbing that old desktop lamp from the attic.
- Use a separate keyboard and mouse.
- Incorporate regular breaks from your work area to encourage movement.
- Make sure the ground around you is free of tripping hazards, we all know how painful stepping on a piece of Lego is!
- Prepare your table/desk with all your necessary equipment for work. Keep frequently used items in close reach to stop overreaching which is a cause of upper back and shoulder pain. Try to keep none work related things or things that may distract you off your work desk/table.

***Set yourself up correctly before the onset of pain or discomfort!***



# Stretching Guide for Homeworking

Author: Gary Scott (BSc Physical Therapy)

Below are examples of stretches which can be done while at your desk. These are given with a rough guideline on how and when to do them. The importance of remaining active during the next few weeks will grow more obvious as time goes on but how we go about staying active is even more important.



These exercises can be easily done at your new home workstation. Getting fresh air during lunch is still important and has a huge part to play in staying productive during our working day. If you are currently suffering from an injury it is advised to seek advice from your healthcare professional before trying these stretches.

## Forearm & Wrist Stretch

- Sitting upright, extend the arm in front of you parallel to the floor.
- Using the opposite hand, pull the wrist back toward the body to a point which a stretch may be felt.
- Pull the wrist back until feeling a stretch in the forearm but without feeling any pain
- Hold the position for 20-30 seconds.





### Pec & Chest Stretch

- Extend your arms from your sides so your forearms are facing away from your body.
- Begin to bring your arms back so you feel a stretch in your pectoral muscles.
- Relax and breathe holding the stretch for 15-20 seconds.



### Overhead Stretch

- Standing or sitting upright, gently lift and extend arms straight over head, as far as comfort and range of motion will allow.
- Hold for 15/20 seconds



### Shoulder Stretch

- Bring one arm up to your chest and support with your other forearm, pull it across your body toward your chest until you feel a stretch in your shoulder.
- Make sure to keep your elbow below shoulder height.
- Hold for 20-30 seconds per shoulder.

# Productivity Tips for Homeworking

Author: Cathal Burke (BSc Health and Performance Science, MSc Human Nutrition)

## Get up and dressed as normal

Although tempting, lounging around in your dressing gown 'for the morning' is a slippery slope you want to avoid. Get dressed in the morning for work. It doesn't have to be super formal but get ready as if a colleague may call over at any stage.

## Have a dedicated workspace

In order to avoid distractions ideally work in a dedicated office space where you can close the door and get down to business. Separating tasks and rooms is vital in maintaining focus and avoiding temptations that will deter productivity.



## Take regular breaks

It may be tempting to work consistently, especially if you're worried people may think you're slacking. Taking regular breaks to go for a walk or chat to colleagues can help replace the lost social aspects or encourage some more activity.

## Exercise

Build time in your schedule to exercise at home, go for a walk at some stage during your day. It improves your well-being, improves focus and provides a change to your surroundings. It may also be an opportunity to socialise with other homeworkers also. It's hard to replace the social aspect of a busy office but some attempt needs to be made! Get out in nature as much as possible!



### **Control your phone usage**

Put your phone on airplane mode when working on a project or a deadline. This allows you to stay focused on the task at hand and not get distracted. Something I find works well for me is putting my personal phone in the room across from my office, I put the volume on loud (calls only). That way if something urgent is happening I hear the call and get up to walk to it. Besides that, I am free from distraction from WhatsApp or social media notifications.

### **Keep your routine**

It's vital to maintain as much of your healthy routine as possible. Keep your times for your breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Eat nutritious meals and drink plenty of water!

### **Give your eyes a break**

For five to 10 minutes every hour: Get up, move around and take your eyes off the screen. The potential to spend more time looking at screens over the next while will be high so be sure to look after your eyes.



### **Prioritise sleep quality**

Get a reasonable number of hours of sleep each night. Avoid screen use up to hour prior to bedtime. Blue light from screens can limit melatonin production which helps with sleep.

## Exercise Considerations for Homeworking

Author: *Daire Fitzgerald (BSc Sport Science, MSc Sport, Performance & Exercise Psychology)*

We all know staying active is vital for both our physical and mental health, and with many of us working from home due to the Covid-19 the question becomes how can we do our best to become more active while at home? Whether you're a bonified gym junkie or a complete novice to exercise, there are plenty of options for you!

### What to focus on if you're not a regular gym-goer

Working from home gives us a great opportunity to get some exercise in during the day. With our standard morning and evening commute time now freed up, this is the perfect time to get moving.



Short walks outdoors can be one of the greatest tools in the home workers' arsenal. They allow us to take a physical break from our desk bound posture, promote blood flow and even improve our hormone balance to reduce stress, promote weight-loss and increase our mood.

For this article we spoke with Dr. Tadhg Macintyre, an expert in the field. His research interests are on topics relating to metacognition, mental health, resilience and recovery, and nature-based interventions for well-being.

*“For the home worker, we can achieve increases in cognitive ability and mood through exposure to nature scenes and exercise in natural environments. These exposures, be they simulated or real experiences, also seem to promote a degree of mindfulness which standard indoor exercise does not” - Dr. Tadhg MacIntyre  
University of Limerick*

Although many of us may not live close to public parks or areas of natural beauty, we can still get out and go for a walk down the road. If you're currently scheduling your day and forming

a daily routine, then adding in a couple of micro-walks is a great step towards increasing activity and healthy.

### **What to focus on for the Regular Gym-goer**

The switch to Home working can be freeing and give a renewed sense of autonomy to us as office workers. But it does bring some challenges. Do I still leave home to go to the gym? Is my gym closed down? What can I do to keep training at home?

Well thankfully there is a huge amount of highly effective exercises you can do from home. The classics, obviously, would include your standard calisthenics, not only the push-ups and sit-ups we've all grown to loath, but a whole range of functional movements which can be easily scaled up or down to suit your level.



- **Be prepared**

If you are going to be training on your own at home then the key will be allocating a time slot, writing out what you're going to do in this time and then executing this plan as best you can. If we want to stay adherent to our exercise regime then pick a time that suits you to train and then stick to it. There are also some great resources out there that will guide you through training sessions online.

- **Do the best with what you have**

When training at home many of us aren't lucky enough to have a huge amount of equipment. So, when you're going to do a workout you need to make sure you've planned out exactly what you are going to do. The last thing you want to do is to be wasting time figuring out if you possibly have additional pieces of gear you've forgotten about. Dig out all those rusty kettlebells and dusty resistance bands and make a plan.

Sample Home Workouts		
Day 1 (At home)	Day 2 At Home	Day 3 Sports Field
<p><b>Warm-up:</b></p> <p><b>Air squats, Burpees, Sit-Ups &amp; Lunges</b></p> <p>(3 rounds, 12 mins) 40 sec per exercise, 20 sec rest between.</p> <p><b>Paused Goblet Squats + Push Ups</b></p> <p>(5 rounds, 10 reps of each) Use a Kettlebell/dumbbell for Goblet Squats</p> <p><b>Side Plank + Superman Plank + Flutter-Kicks</b></p> <p>(3 rounds, 1min each with 30 secs rest between)</p> <p><b>Cool-down:</b></p> <p><b>Child's Pose, Couch Stretch, Downward Dog &amp; Upward Dog.</b></p> <p>(1 minute in each)</p>	<p><b>Warm-up:</b></p> <p><b>Inchworms, Squat Jumps &amp; Scaled Push Ups</b></p> <p>(4 rounds, 12 mins) 40 sec per exercise, 20 sec rest between.</p> <p><b>Kettlebell RDL + Front-foot Raised Split Squats</b></p> <p>(4 rounds, 12 reps &amp; 8 reps each side respectively) Use a Kettlebell/dumbbell for RDLs</p> <p><b>Glute Bridge Hold + Single Leg Glute Raise</b></p> <p>(4 rounds, 1min per hold &amp; 10 reps each side for Raise)</p> <p><b>Cool-down:</b></p> <p><b>Seated Double Hamstring Stretch, Pike Pancake stretch &amp; Straddle Sit</b></p> <p>(1 minute in each)</p>	<p><b>Warm-up:</b></p> <p><b>Jog 400m, slow pace, extend stride in second half of run.</b></p> <p><b>200m Runs:</b></p> <p>4 sets with 1-minute rest between (75% of Sprint Pace)</p> <p><b>800m Run:</b></p> <p>2 Sets with 2 mins rest between. (60% of Sprint Pace)</p> <p><b>2km Run:</b></p> <p>1 Set (50% of Sprint Pace)</p> <p><b>Cool-down:</b></p> <p><b>Focus on Calves, Hamstrings, Glutes &amp; Quads</b></p>

## How to maintain top performance for the High-Performer

If you're an athlete who trains multiple times per week in a team-based or coach-led environment, then these few weeks may be a challenge for you. The absence of equipment, team-mates and coaches can be hard to take but here are a few tips we think could allow you to keep making progress.



- **Short, Sharp and to the Point**

Without the facilities of a gym or the guidance of a coach it's very easy to get side-tracked and amble through a home training session. For this reason, set yourself a time, be in 20 or 30 mins keeps it short. This allows us to keep an element of novelty around these stripped-back and simplified sessions, while also ensuring you aren't spending all your time out in the back garden or in the shed trying to elicit some sort of training response.

- **Increase frequency of Sessions**

For the average person the idea of training every day or multiple times per day seems ludicrous, but this may not be so crazy when you consider the length of each session and the relative intensity in each one. If you are an athlete who is used to 3 or more intense training sessions per week, then training multiple times a day under normal circumstances would become inhibitive to success as you may not have ample time to recover. But if your sessions go from being 90 minutes of pitch-based training down to 25 minutes of core work in your living room then you should be well able. Try doing a 15- or 20-minute cardio piece in the morning, before work, and then in the evening hit one of your home-workout resistance training session. You will be surprised just how effective this can be.

## Nutrition Considerations for Homeworking

Author: Cathal Burke (BSc Health and Performance Science, MSc Human Nutrition)

It can be difficult to get nutrition right at the best of times. Add a more sedentary lifestyle than normal, elevated levels of stress and reduced social interactions to the mix and the difficulty skyrockets. With nutrition, the same principals ring through. I'll go through these below to help with setting up your meals and what foods you should focus on. You will also get a lot of value from tweaking some habits and implementing some rules for yourself in your new work environment!

First off, it's important to remember that the foundation for managing your weight is energy or calorie balance. Energy Balance equates to the amount of food you consume versus the amount of energy you expend during exercise and daily activity.

Simply put;

Consume 2000 calories	Burn 2000 calories	Calorie Balance - Weight stays the same
Consume 2000 calories	Burn 1500 calories	Calorie Surplus – Weight Gain
Consume 2000 calories	Burn 2500 calories	Calorie Deficit – Weight Loss

It's all physics!

All the food we eat is made up of three types of chemical compounds, macronutrients: Protein, Carbohydrate and Fat. Their roles in the body vary and some are more important than others but to simplify things.

**Protein** - *To build and repair muscle fibres after exercise.*

**Fat** - *For hormone formation and energy for daily activity aside from working out.*

**Carbohydrate** - *For energy during high intensity exercise.*

Many factors affect your day to day activity level or the number of calories you 'burn'. Your occupation, working environment, hobbies and mode of transport to name a few. Unfortunately, we are now facing into a greatly reduced normal activity level for a prolonged period. Therefore, it is vital to implement strategies to increase your activity level.

## The Effect of Occupational Activity on Caloric Expenditure

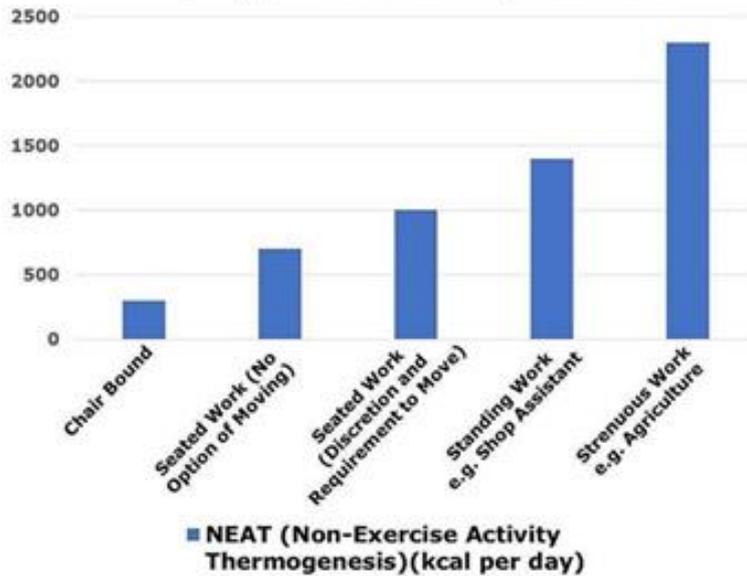


Table extrapolated from: 'The Role of Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis in Human Obesity'. Data assumes a BMR of 1600 kcal per day.

For the next while there are a few things to consider which will help you maintain a healthy diet during this stressful time and help prevent weight gain.

### Eat more fruit and veg – Buy frozen produce where possible

Try to fill your plate with veg or fruit first. Veg and fruit tends to be lower in calories/carbs and as we're most likely doing less high intensity exercise, we need less energy and carbs to avoid overeating. It's also an excellent way of getting in as much micronutrients as possible so you can continue to feel and perform well. Frozen fruit and veg are excellent options also due to their nutrition and convenience.

### Eat more protein

When we're bored, we tend to snack on whatever convenience food is knocking around the house. Protein is the most satiating of all the micronutrients so eating a little extra protein will help keep you fuller and help prevent excess gorging on biscuits or crisps.

### Chew your food

Be more mindful with your eating. Be sure to chew your food thoroughly and take your time eating. This will help reduce overeating.

### Buy more non-perishable foods

Stock up on more healthy, nutritious items that will last such as;

- Legumes and Beans (Source of fibre and protein)
- Canned Fish (Excellent source of protein and Omega 3)
- Nut Butter (Source of protein and fat)

- Wholemeal Pasta and Rice (source of high fibre carbs)
- Oats (Handy for breakfast and baking also)
- Popcorn (Low calorie snacking option for the foreseeable Netflix binges)

## Track your steps

If our daily activity is significantly down due to no work commute, minimal sport, reduced social interactions and less trips to the shops it's vital to develop other ways to stay active. Keeping with the social distancing advice do more jobs around the house, go for more long walks and do home workouts.

A great way of monitor your activity level is to track steps. To track steps there are many methods including watches, pedometers and phone apps. If you have an iPhone the 'Health' app is perfect, otherwise download 'Moves' for android and just keep the phone in your pocket for it to track your daily steps. Set your daily goal, for 8,000-10,000, and get to work. A little and often works well here, a step count goal will also encourage you to get out in nature more which will have a positive effect on your mental health.

## Drink water

Keep drinking your 2-3 litres of water each day. This will help with managing over-snacking. It's also important to keep as many habits as possible

## Supplementation

**Vitamin D3** - We should always be supplementing with Vitamin D in Ireland due to our lack of sunshine - now more so than ever! Vitamin D3 (which is more easily absorbed than simple Vitamin D) has been linked to various health benefits such as improved bone, brain and nervous system health.

**Multi-Vitamin** - With a reduced availability of some foods it may be beneficial to supplement with a multi-vitamin to ensure you won't be nutrient deficient in any area by acting as a kind of 'insurance' supplement.

*We also got input from nutrition expert **Danny Lennon**, owner of **Sigma Nutrition** and host of **Sigma Nutrition Radio**, for his take on what to focus on for the next while.*

*Danny explained that although some sites will lead you to believe a healthy diet will be of some combat to the virus this isn't the case. A healthy diet won't replace social distancing, avoiding groups, washing hands or avoiding touching your face. It will however help maintain a physical and mental health.*

*Danny also advised to keep snacks away from the workstation. The temptation will always be there to pick away at some sweet or salty treats during this time. It's important for your physical wellbeing and mental performance to stick to nutritionally dense meals full of fruit and veg. It's also vital to get out into nature for more walks to help combat the reduced daily activity.*

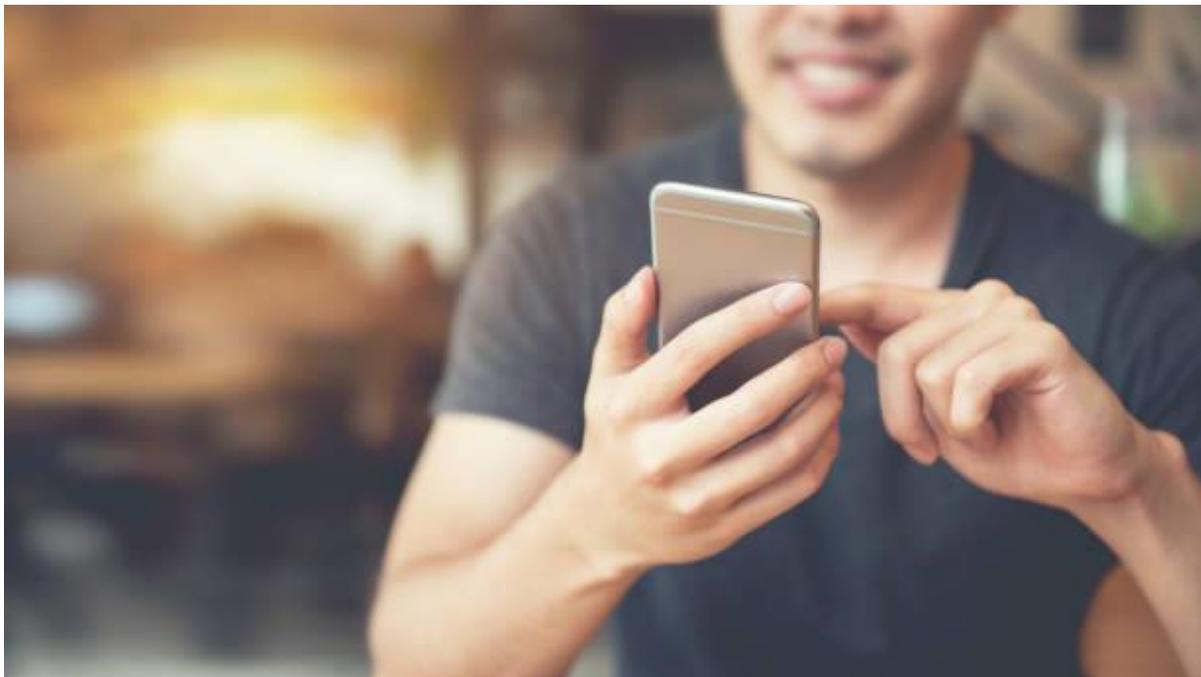
## Managing your Mental Health while Homeworking

Author: *Daire Fitzgerald (BSc Sport Science, MSc Sport, Performance & Exercise Psychology)*

Moving from a busy, social office with several colleagues to working from home can be a difficult transition. Especially if there is a sense of unknown about how long this will go on for. Take these areas into consideration to ease the transition.

### Daily Micro-Meetings

Undoubtedly one of the hardest things we will face during these periods of social distancing is the isolation we will feel. It may be a lot tougher to sit at our desk and deal with the more difficult aspects of our jobs when we don't have the support of our peers and colleagues around us. We may feel like some tasks are just too hard to face alone. In cases such as these a great move is to have regular catch-up team meetings throughout the week, make more people in your team are aware of the tasks you are handling the cognitive loading associated with them.



### Messaging Services

We may also be in the situation where we no longer have access to the guiding ear of our superiors or more experienced peers. Where a normal office offers the opportunity for informal chats and interaction, a call may seem formal and if they are too frequent, we may feel like you're wasting a peer's time. An idea to combat this is to agree on a messaging platform where ideas and questions can be posed, we then don't put pressure on others to respond immediately while also have an easy and accessible outlet for support.

## Account for the Lack of Normal Social Constraints

We often hear the negatives of social constraint, how they alter people's view of themselves, lower confidence and restrict individualism. But in reality, social constraints are what guide many of us in our regular lives, they keep us on schedule, they make us accountable for our actions and they allow for individuals to collaborate and work seamlessly together. When you're working at home there should still be some social constraints, language used in informal messaging can't become too relaxed just because both employees are talking from the comfort of their own home, time-frames may need to be extended due to external factors such as decrease access to equipment but they can't cease to exist! It is important to note that we are trying to conserve our normal habits and workflow, the change to homeworking is already a huge alteration to our habits, so let's try to conserve as many as we can.



The same goes for the social constraints, if you usually exercise with a group regularly then take the step to still exercise as a group, but in different locations. If you usually play tennis with three others on a Thursday, then pick a home workout that is doable for all members of the group, pick a time to do it, and then complete it as a group. Hold yourself accountable to do it on time and in its entirety. Or even if you usually run as a group then share your time on applications such as Strava.

## Managing Anxiety

Aside from the obvious cause of anxiety in our current situation, anxiety can arise in the workplace for a number of reasons such as high workload, clashes of personality, or personal issues between colleagues. In the home working environment, we can see similar issues arise as well as a few more.

### Address Causes, not symptoms

Take for example someone who is working in a role that involves a large amount of collaborative work. A slightly slower than usual internet connection, combined with an alternative VDU set-up can be a huge issue. In cases such as these we cannot simply increase the number of hours we work, although that is what many people will opt to do. We must

start by addressing the underlying issues, the equipment may not be fit for purpose and additional aids may be needed or else the level of collaboration needed for efficient work may be too high for a team to rely on a weekly call, so maybe a system such as Google Hangout or something similar could be used to be able to work and collaborate in real time.



### Home Working not Office Living

We spoke earlier about the importance of setting home boundaries for Home working. This is never truer than for the purpose of lowering anxiety. If we have taken the step to start working from home, then we must ensure that the home remains un-intruded by our workstation. Keep work equipment such as laptops, notebooks and phones away from communal areas. So, if you do work at the dining room table during the day, then clear everything to the side at the end of the day. This seems like a needless move if there is enough room on the table for you to have dinner and to keep your workstation erected, but we must have some sort of cognitive distance between our work hours and our home hours. This distance simply cannot exist if you can hear to fan of your CPU running while you are watching TV or if you can see the glow of your screen while you're in bed.

A nice technique for situations such as these is **FRAMING**. Athletes often use framing to help transition between times of Training to times of Relaxation. Take 3 minutes before you open your computer in the morning, sit in quietness, think about the tasks you have just left behind you (e.g. Making breakfast, replying to friends' messages, talking to your spouse.) and then say goodbye to these thoughts, you then take the remaining time and compile a process of how you will complete your tasks throughout the day.

## About the Authors

KOS Ergonomic Solutions is a leading provider of ergonomic solutions and services in Ireland. With a multi-disciplinary team of Ergonomic Consultants with backgrounds in Physical Therapy, Nutrition, Health and Performance Science, Psychology and Ergonomics they provide a full cycle solution to some of Ireland's largest multinational companies to manage comfort in the workplace. They provide a range services including VDU Assessments, Ergonomic Program Management Software, and Remote Homeworking Ergonomic Assessments along with having one of Europe's widest range of ergonomic equipment for the office and at home. The team at KOS are passionate about making each workplace they encounter in the office or at home a healthier place to work.

If you want any further information or advice on any area referenced in this E-Book get in touch:

[sales@kos.ie](mailto:sales@kos.ie) or call 01 6110 200.

**Be healthy and be safe!**

**Best wishes from all at KOS Ergonomics!**