

Working from home and staying healthy

Most people have adopted the idea of working from home to achieve all the [sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#) and stay healthy, even in the midst of various emergency challenges, such as the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), which has affected the health of workers, leading to lockdowns across different parts of the world.

It is not a new thing to see people earn a living right from the comfort of their own homes without having to move past the door. Technology has also made work much easier, where workers can now perform many office duties remotely.

It is important to note that although remote working has many benefits, most people have encountered certain health risks that they may not have encountered if they were working in a physical and standard office.

Working from home: A brief overview

Although there is an increase in the number of people that now work from home, it has been in existence since the 1970s, hence, the idea of remote working began as early as then, emphasising how communication has been substituted and enhanced despite the distance.

The remote worker, who is often connected to an internet service provider (ISP), uses mobile telecommunication technological gadgets, such as laptops, PCs, smartphones, tablets, etc.

As time passed, people continuously employed more efficient methods to enhance the process of working from home. Useful software, such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, and Slack are currently being used to enhance the communication between members of a workplace.

More workers are now employing telecommuting as they encounter diverse challenges. In a [recent survey](#), Arne stated, “... Before the pandemic, 17% of U.S employees worked from home 5 days or more per week, a share that increased to 44% during the coronavirus pandemic” (Arne, 2020).



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Health benefits of working from home

Due to the nature of most jobs, many workers go through various stressful sessions to reach their workplaces. Morris (2020) added that in times of crisis, most workers can only survive by [telecommuting](#). As he explained, *"Telecommuting is an apt approach to the coronavirus crisis."*

The idea of telecommuting has helped solve some of these problems, as workers can now lessen the numerous burdens they face on a daily basis while going to work. Here are some [benefits of remote working](#):

1. Reduced stress during the commute

Remote work lessens the stress workers go through when getting out of the house, getting a ride (especially if they don't have cars), and going to a place of work. Workers can now comfortably work from home without stepping out of the house.

2. Positive impact on the environment

With fewer vehicles, people, and noise on the streets, this helps [reduce pollution](#) in the environment, while allowing nature to **THRIVE** again.

3. Work-life balance

Sometimes, the nature of some non-remote work can be very daunting that one may find it difficult to create a work-life balance. Workers in this category may struggle to make ends meet especially when they run as a family. Remote workers can also easily find comfort and stability when working from home.

There are also many other benefits of working from home, which include:

4. Flexible work in any environment.
5. Fewer expenses and more savings.
6. Less impact on the environment.
7. Personalised office space (Emily, 2020).

Unhealthy work-from-home habits

While it is fun and relaxing to work from home, many workers do not utilize this means properly. As a result, it has led to several challenges that can affect their health. Here are a few [poor habits](#) that are associated with remote working:

1. Poor eating habits

Remote workers can skip meals or eat at inappropriate times. Due to the nature of the work, it may be difficult to set defined times for carrying out certain tasks. When they are not guided, they may end up having poor eating habits.

2. Bad posture

Working from home can be tiring. Workers have to sit in front of the laptop for hours and when they don't leave or move about during intervals, it may pose a problem. In addition, when they work, it is possible to have a bad posture in terms of slant feet, wrong position of wrists, and lack of back support, where many other irregular positions can lead to the distortion of the normal form of the body and cause chronic pain.

3. Poor time management

It is no news that when employees work by their own timetable, they become very

flexible and can make personal decisions regarding their time, which might be positive or negative. This is why many telecommuters fail to properly manage their time. It is easier to wake up or sleep at any time of the day and this leads to less productivity.

4. Poor personal hygiene

When workers stay at home all day, it is easier to not leave the bed. Sometimes, they fail to carry out basic personal hygiene practices and they rush to work as a means to accomplish many tasks that they ignore their own wellbeing.

5. Poor social life

Remote working has also driven many people into isolation. People no longer connect due to the intense work and pressure to meet deadlines. Hence, they become lonely and [ignore their social life](#), which can become detrimental to their mental health.

6. Over-working

Sometimes, telecommuting brings work that most remote workers can handle, hence, they have little time for themselves. Spending a great amount of time meeting a deadline without planning a schedule or having a to-do list can be very dangerous to one's health. As the pressure becomes too intense, the remote workers can lose their work efficiency.

7. Poor healthcare

Due to the delicacy of achieving a work-life balance, it can be difficult to properly manage one's health. Workers tend to neglect their health challenges because of the need to complete a task. They ignore ailments, such as a headache, stomach cramps, tiredness, and other health issues. While they may not seem serious, they can pose a threat when neglected for too long (Kylie, 2019).

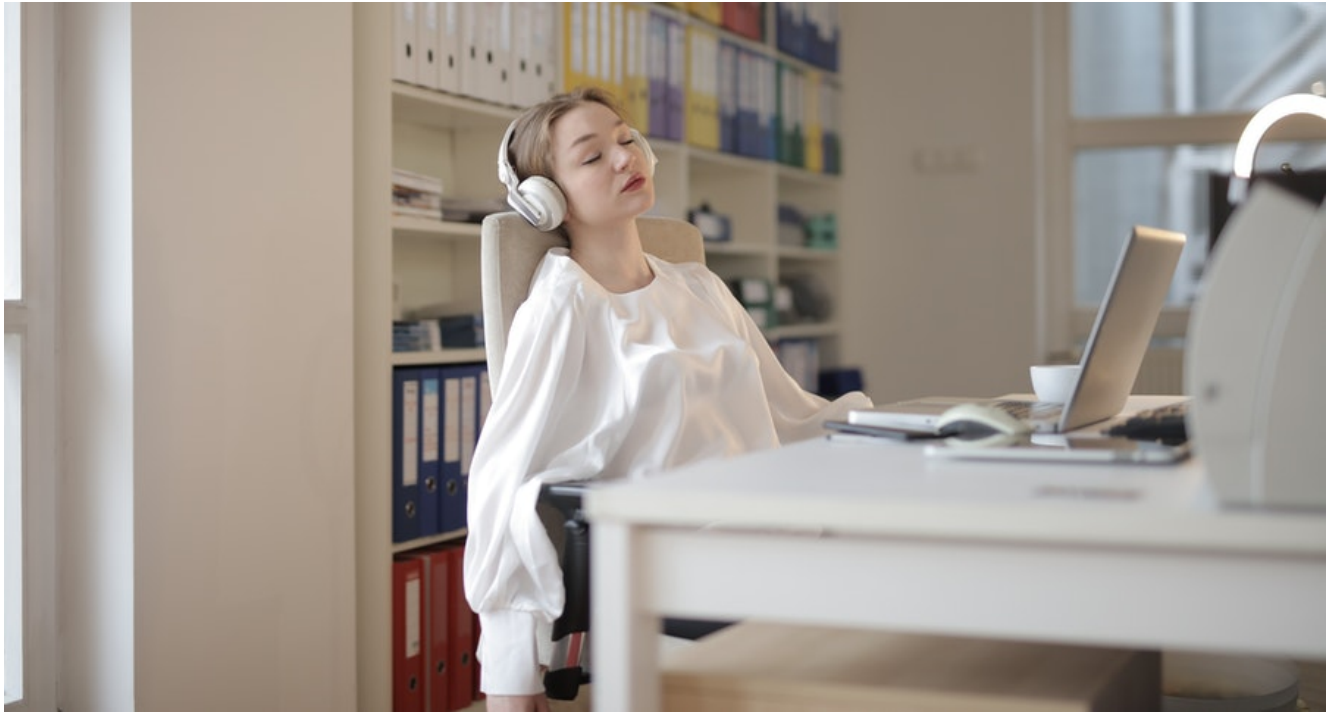


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Health challenges that people face when working from home

As more and more workers adapt to remote working, it becomes easier to encounter [certain risks](#), as there is very little knowledge or information regarding staying safe and living in a healthy condition as a telecommuter.

Researchers in Italy have [conducted a survey](#) and provided results on the impact of working from home amid the COVID-19 pandemic, where they published their study in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. They studied 51 people who worked from home in Italy. After the survey, they gathered that 41.2% of the people experienced low back pain, while 23.5% reported neck pain. Moreover, some respondents agreed that the neck pain became worse since they began working from home (Antimo et al., 2020).

Ashley Hull (2020) also expressed this concern and stated the following three major health challenges that telecommuters may face when they ignore certain precautions:

1. Musculoskeletal Pain

As the name implies, it affects the muscles and bones. It only occurs when a worker fails to practice a proper sitting (or working) posture during their work hours. Bad positions, such as curving the ankle, bending at an abnormal angle, twisting the neck for long hours, or bending the knees can cause severe pains.

2. Eyestrain

One attribute of most telecommuters is the act of sitting in front of their PCs for hours while working on a project. This is a popular activity and staring at the screen for hours can cause eye strain, which may lead to certain eye defects. There are basic and proper practices that will allow a worker to work from home without straining their eyes. One proven method is to move the eyes away from the screen at frequent time intervals.

3. Mental health challenge

Since working from home may not have any specific time boundaries, it is difficult to connect and interact with friends and family. People work more indoors and as a result, they are isolated from society. This can affect the [mental health](#) of telecommuters, as they feel lonely and pressured to continuously complete tasks.

Positive ways to stay healthy in a remote setting

There are [many different strategies](#) that can help any worker effectively accomplish tasks at home without facing any health challenges.

1. Eat healthy meals

While it is very easy to skip meals and eat just “anything,” workers should have their meals planned to help them eat healthy foods at the right time.

2. Avoid distractions

One thing that can that can affect the ability to work effectively is having many

surrounding distractions. It delays time and makes the task seem uninteresting. In addition, the work becomes too tedious and stressful. To avoid this, workers should minimize and eliminate distractions whenever possible.

3. Have a working schedule

A schedule or to-do list can help create a plan for the day, week, or month. It also helps reduce distractions and a poor workflow. With proper schedules, remote workers are guided and properly directed to adhere to deadlines.

4. Practice good posture

Good posture eliminates unnecessary pains and strains. Workers should learn how to sit properly in front of a screen, maintain their feet flat on the ground, and their neck straight for efficiency.

5. Carry out simple workouts

Telecommuters do not need to perform intense workouts, but simple workouts, such as five to ten push-ups daily, could go a long way in reducing various body pains. It also maintains the worker's alert and fitness for the task ahead.

Final thoughts

Working from home while staying healthy is possible. Many remote workers ignore certain practices and this can cause serious dangers, and in turn, affect their workflow and output.

Telecommuters should also adjust their negative habits that can disrupt their performance at work. In addition, practicing positive measures will not only help workers maximize the benefits, but it will also allow them to spend less time and be more productive.

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