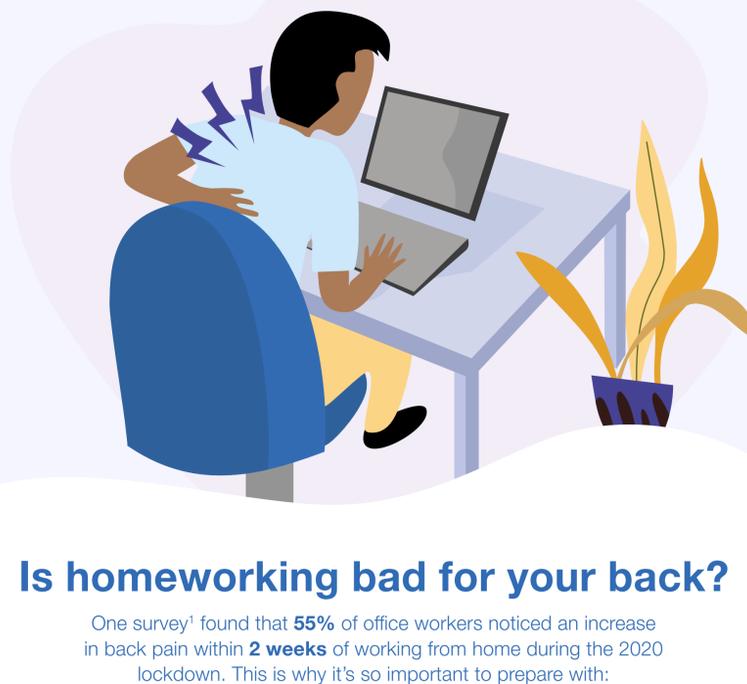


A homemaker's guide to **back care**

Sub-par homeworking spaces and unhealthy habits, like not moving enough, can leave you with painful back problems. Luckily, there's plenty of simple things you can do to protect your back at home.



Is homeworking bad for your back?

One survey¹ found that **55%** of office workers noticed an increase in back pain within **2 weeks** of working from home during the 2020 lockdown. This is why it's so important to prepare with:



- A suitably quiet, spacious place to work
- A full workstation (desk, ergonomic chair, monitor arms/laptop stand, mouse and keyboard)



- Good working habits, including regular activity breaks

Possible reasons for work from home back pain

Stress, leading to involuntary tension in your body	Unsuitable equipment	Lack of space	Poorly positioned equipment
Soft, unsupportive seating (sofas, armchairs, beds)	Poor posture, including hunching and slouching	Working in one position for too long	Not moving or exercising enough

Want to take better care of your back and feel healthier, energised and more productive? Here are some bad habits you may need to crush, and some good habits to replace them with.

STOP	START
<p>Looking down at your laptop/phone/tablet screen</p> <p>Your head is heavy! The further forward it hangs, the more weight it's putting on your spine. Forward head posture (FHP) causes headaches, pins and needles and neck problems as well as back pain.</p>	<p>Using a laptop/phone/tablet stand</p> <p>An adjustable stand will elevate your device so you don't have to look down. Ideally, you want the top of your screen at eye level. Your head should be comfortably balanced between your shoulders.</p>
<p>Spending hours in the same spot</p> <p>Being present at your desk isn't the same as being productive. It's good to get up; your body and mind are healthier when you're moving regularly. Prolonged inactivity can even increase existing back pain as you lose core strength and fatigue your musculoskeletal system.</p>	<p>Moving every 20-30 minutes</p> <p>Regular activity increases heart health, boosts circulation and makes you feel energised. Set an alarm to get up regularly to dance, run up and down stairs, do some jumping jacks, or simply stretch.</p>
<p>Working for too long on your bed, sofa, or floor</p> <p>Soft furnishings probably won't give you the level of back support you need to maintain a good posture. There's only so long your core muscles can support you upright. You'll soon find yourself slumping — especially if you're caught up in work.</p>	<p>Using an ergonomic chair</p> <p>Spend most of your working day using a chair with lumbar support and seat and back height/angle adjustments. Make sure some of your weight is supported by the chair back and sit close enough to the desk to comfortably reach your keyboard and mouse.</p>

Try these stretches for better back health at home

If you work at a desk most of the time, it's important to take regular moving and stretching breaks. Regular stretching stops you becoming stiff and achy, and keeps your back as healthy and mobile as possible.

<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interlace fingers and lift arms above head, keeping elbows straight • Pressing arms back, slowly stretch to one side • Hold for slow count of 10 • Repeat 3-5 times on each side
<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interlace fingers and lift arms above head • Slowly lean backwards until stretch is felt • Hold for slow count of 10 • Repeat 3-5 times
<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold right arm with left hand just above elbow • Gently push elbow towards left shoulder until stretch is felt • Hold for slow count of 10 • Repeat 3-5 times to each side <p style="font-size: small; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">When carrying out desk stretches, move slowly and stop immediately if you feel any discomfort or pain.</p>

What's next?

If you're struggling with back pain while working from home, it's always worth seeking advice from your GP. You can find more detailed advice and suggested products to help on our [Guide to work from home back pain](#).

Research Links

¹www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/ies-working-home-wellbeing-survey