

While Australia takes further steps to combat the spread of COVID-19 in our community many workplaces are requiring that their employees work from home. This can understandably be a very stressful time for you as an employee as we balance anxiety about the wellbeing of family and friends, while also being required to continue to keep up normal workload and responsibilities.

If you are considering working from home in the coming weeks and have portable devices, it is important to make sure they will work remotely. We recommend taking devices home and practice logging on to your network and commonly used software.

Staff Rotating

If it is not possible for your business to operate 100% remotely, consider splitting staff into teams and rotating in and out of the office. It is a good idea to keep teams on the same floor to identify possible spread of COVID-19.

Consider staggering start times of employees with other team members. This will reduce the number of people travelling on public transport at peak times.

Check in Regularly with Colleagues

For some working from home may be an isolating experience, no longer surrounded by in-person contact and instant support of colleagues. It is our human instinct to come together as a community in times of stress. This is a very novel situation in which we will help the situation by staying apart.

Don't Only Rely on Email

Be sure to check in on colleagues regularly. Stay active on messenger, using platforms such as Slack or MS Teams. It is important to increase the utilisation of video chat. Being able to see the faces of co-workers will give the feeling that everyone is still connected. Even if you don't have a specific question to ask, still check in regularly just as you would in the workplace.

Consider playing fun games with staff to increase communication – e.g. instigating a competition to post a photo of the best lunch or posting photos of your animal colleagues.

OH&S Considerations

Due to the unpredictable nature of the situation, it is important for organisations to consider long term remote working arrangements. It may be difficult to arrange OH&S assessments of home work environments immediately. Employers have ultimate responsibility to ensure an ergonomically safe work environment. Urge staff members to seek advice and support if they do not feel adequately comfortable in their home office.

- Employers, if you don't already have one, develop a working from home policy that outlines methods to verify the safety of employee's work environments.
- If employees do not have proper office furniture or technology, employers should consider loaning these items to staff.

Practice self-care while working from home

Maintain your routine

Stick to your regular routine. Consider what your habits are on a regular workday, avoid sleeping in, shower and dress for a normal day, take normal breaks and stick to regular eating schedules.

Don't fill spare time with more work

Stick to your normal working hours. Don't feel pressured to fill the extra time with more work. Create time boundaries and use the extra time you would spend on your commute to prepare yourself for the day.

Take a break!

Take 5-10-minute breaks throughout the day. It is common in the office to pause and chat with co-workers. Use this time to take a concerted break from the computer. If safe to do so, walk the dog or spend lunch in an open outside space.

If you are finding that your wellbeing and everyday functioning is being disrupted by feelings of anxiety and thoughts of COVID-19, please consider seeking support from

For free professional and confidential counselling please call us today on 1300 130 130.

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