

# How to beat burnout while working from home

Working from home can shift the boundaries of what work looks like. For all the upsides, there's also being out and about less, being apart from our colleagues, balancing other commitments and for some, working longer hours.

The lines between work and home can blur and the downsides can be stressful. And if it goes unchecked, that stress can lead to burnout.

With almost one in five Kiwis still working from home right now, and remote work becoming more popular, more of us may face this particular kind of burnout.

So, if you're working from home, how can you maintain your wellbeing and avoid work-from-home burnout?

Health and wellbeing psychologist, Dr Marny Lishman, offers her advice.

## What are the signs of burnout?

"Burnout is a result of continuous and often unmanaged stress levels related to someone's work," says Lishman. "Burnout can present in physical and mental ways."

Lishman notes common signs of burnout include feeling less focused, feeling more cynical about your job, being less productive and being unable to cope emotionally with anything professionally or personally.

Physical signs of burnout can include exhaustion, changes in sleeping patterns and increased illness, such as headaches, colds and flus.

"When people are feeling burnt out, they often adopt unhelpful coping mechanisms, such as drinking alcohol and eating unhealthy foods, but this only exacerbates their stress," Lishman says.

## Why beating burnout is important

We all experience stress differently, and there are many things that can contribute to burnout: a lack of boundaries around work, unmanaged stress or anxiety, lack of exercise or poor lifestyle habits.

"If left unchecked and unmanaged, burnout can lead to physical and mental illness," Lishman says. "When someone is chronically stressed over a long period of time, it impacts hugely on their psychological and physical wellbeing and flows into other areas of their life, such as relationships."

## 6 wellbeing strategies to help you beat burnout

If you're feeling at risk of burnout – or want to proactively prevent stress from building up – try these actions for better wellbeing:

### 1. **Keep moving**

Working from home can mean fewer opportunities to be active, and a tendency to get 'stuck' at your desk. Combating this can be key. Lishman suggests taking regular breaks throughout the day, away from your desk and ideally outside. "It can be helpful to set a reoccurring alarm to prompt you to move every hour and, if you can, set aside time each day for a gym class or walk, even if it's only for half an hour."

### 2. **Take a break**

Daily breaks are important, but longer time off matters, too. Lishman recommends taking your holiday leave, even if it's only for shorter local trips or a rest. "Being away from your work environment will give you a chance to switch off, recharge and relax," Lishman says. "Even a few days or a long weekend can be enough."

### 3. **Get enough rest**

To feel fully rested, Lishman suggests going to bed and waking at the same time every day. She also suggests drinking herbal tea or warm milk before bed to help you sleep and advises against drinking caffeine or alcohol later at night. [Try these tips if you're having trouble sleeping.](#)

### 4. **Talk it out**

"Just talking about your stresses can make you feel better," Lishman says. "A friend, family member or professional can offer advice and an objective opinion which may help you manage your work and emotions better."

### 5. **Fuel your body**

"Fuelling your body with nutritious food and water will help you stay physically well and mentally alert and focused," says Lishman. "Moderating your alcohol intake will also help."

### 6. **Set boundaries**

It can be hard to rest or relax when work starts to creep into your home life, but that's where boundaries can help. "Put boundaries and expectations in place with your employers about your workload and your hours and don't be tempted to work weekends," Lishman says. "Turn your computer, work phone and email notifications off at the end of the day and, if necessary, put an out of office reply on as this will relieve any pressure to respond to people outside of hours."

Burnout can happen in all sorts of situations where there's stress. But when we work from home, the blurring of work and home life can make it especially important to stop stress from going unchecked. Recognising the warning signs and taking positive steps for your wellbeing can help you to avoid burnout, and have a better experience working from home.

*If you're finding things tough right now, you don't have to handle it alone – there's support available. The [Mental Health Foundation](#) has advice and resources on stress, burnout and mental health in general. The [Ministry of Health](#) also offers a collection of resources and services.*

## **Read more:**

- [3 signs you're at risk of burnout and what to do next](#)
- [How to say 'no' and set boundaries at work](#)
- [How to structure your day when you work from home](#)