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The Work-at-Home Dress Code: What to Wear Now!

From flannel pajamas to fleece vests, here's what boomers with home offices are sporting this season

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John Stark is the articles editor of Next Avenue. Follow John on Twitter [@jrstark](#).



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In case you hadn't noticed, it's Fashion Week in New York City. The world's leading designers — Marc Jacobs, Prada, Chanel, Armani, Calvin Klein, Lagerfeld, you name them — are in town to show off their new collections.

According to the media, the well-dressed woman this spring will be wearing bold patterns in stripes, checks, polka dots and animal prints. As for sportswear, look for short suits, tweed jackets, maxi dresses, '60s silhouettes and sheer panels. The hot colors:

Deep red and beachy turquoises.

This spring's GQ male will be seen in seersucker suits, cable-knit sweaters, anoraks, neon-colored ties and pastel-colored running shoes.

I like fashion as well as the next person. Who doesn't want to look stylish? I used to think nothing of spending \$300 for a shirt at Barney's. But the truth is, more and more workers — me among them — aren't going out their front doors anymore to earn a living.

It's estimated that at least 20 million to 30 million Americans work at home at least one day a week. Of the 30 million small businesses in the United States, half are home-based. Entrepreneurial activity is at its highest level in years, with 55- to 64-year-olds representing the second most active age group. One technology research firm predicts that by the year 2016 some 63 million Americans will be telecommuting.

The fashion industry may not have noticed, but these statistics have brought about a new fashion trend: work-at-home wear.

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Take me, for example. I am sporting one of my signature ensembles as I type these words. It consists of red lobster-print pajama bottoms (my version of an animal print), a lime-green thermal top, white sweat socks and a pair of flip-flops (yellow to add dramatic tension). Who needs a coat or jacket? My outerwear is a dark-blue cotton Land's End bathrobe (a Christmas gift from my sister-in-law) with missing sash (last seen in the dryer).

I wore this look to both breakfast and lunch today. I might even wear it to dinner, depending on how late I have to work.

Most of my friends now work at home, too. In honor of Fashion Week, I thought I'd find out what

they've chosen to wear today.

Kathy, an advertising executive in San Francisco, sports an old pair of pink clover print pajamas topped by a red J. Crew cotton camisole. Going for the layered look, she's thrown on an aubergine lightweight Eddie Bauer zip parka. Rather than turn on the heat (a typical San Franciscan), she's boldly added another layer: An Eddie Bauer brown down vest! Her feet are snug in UGG moccasins.

Barbara, a fashion photographer in Manhattan, is of course in New York black. Preferring the comfort of her knobby-kneed cotton pants, stretched out from sitting day-after-day at her computer, she accents her dark palette with tiger-print bedroom slippers.

In Santa Fe my friend Heidi Schulman, author of *The Original Dog Tarot*, has a flair for pairing sleepwear with outdoor wear — think Gap Body meets Patagonia.

Today she's chosen skinny jeans accented by a black and white, snowflake-motif flannel pajama top. She's layered that with an orange polar fleece vest. Pale green wool socks, leg warmers and brown suede clogs add a retro panache. Low-impact aerobics, camping or contra dancing, she's ready.

A word of advice from Heidi: "It's important to have the right coat to throw on in case you have to run out without warning."

Of course, if it isn't cold out that can be a problem, as she recently discovered. "The other day I was on a deadline when my printer ran out of ink," she says. "I quickly headed out the door, my coat covering my green and pink pajama top that's patterned with snoring sheep. I was sweltering while waiting in line at the store so I unbuttoned my coat. The woman standing in front of me definitely noticed what I had on underneath. It was one of those moments when I wished I were invisible."

Heidi also has a little fashion advice for work-at-homers who have animals. "Never," she says, "buy polar fleece because of the pet-hair factor."

Looking at my computer's clock, I see it's after 10 p.m. The New York fashionistas are probably just starting to party in their designer couture. Me, I'm worn out from a long day at my home office. I don't think I'll fix dinner. I may just climb into bed. It's only steps away from my desk. No need to slip into my pajamas. I'm already in them.

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