

# Creating Safe Work Habits

## Ergonomics – Working from Home

With the onset of COVID-19 in the United States and businesses adjusting personnel policies to reduce the amount of human contact, we are seeing an increase in employees working from home. Although this seems like an easy solution to increase social distancing, it does bring about potential negative effects as it relates to ergonomics. During this time, we do not have the luxury of a planned transition to a home office that can take weeks to ensure proper ergonomic equipment and set-up. For this reason, we need to provide our employees with tools to help them understand ergonomic best practices that they can implement in their home.

The four key best practices are:

1. Keep your work in front of you
  - Do not twist in your chair to perform work
  - This includes writing on a note pad
2. Maintain good posture while you are sitting
  - Hips and knees at 90° angle or slightly greater
  - Feet flat on the floor or footrest
  - Back against the chair's back cushion
    - If your elbows are on the table or desk, you are leaning forward and are exhibiting poor posture
3. Avoid reaching
  - Keep arms close to your body
  - This includes using the keyboard and mouse
4. Take frequent breaks and stretch periodically
  - Do this at least once an hour
  - Walk around and get the blood flowing
  - Focus your gaze on far away items to exercise your eyes

### Stretch Examples



The following guidelines are for ideal home office conditions and access to ergonomic equipment. These include:

- If you have a computer desk or workstation at home, make this your first option.
- Ensure that your work area is free of trip hazards (especially the laptop power cord).
- Set your monitor directly in front of you and at a level that keeps your neck from bending (tilting your head forward to look down). The top of the monitor should be even with your eyes.
  - For multiple monitors, keep your primary monitor in front of you
  - Secondary monitors side by side with the primary and at same height as the primary

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- Keep your arms close to the body with elbows bent close to a 90° angle
  - Wrists should be even or lower than your elbows
  - Forearms, wrists and hands should be in a straight line
- Use an ergonomic office/desk chair
  - Lumbar support for lower back
  - Use/utilize the arm rests if they are adjustable
- Avoid reaching. This includes typing, using the mouse, accessing the printer, answering the phone, etc.
- Use whole arm movements when using the mouse
  - Do not move your wrist from side to side
- Use a document holder for report writing
  - Place in front of you between the monitor and keyboard
    - Tilt the holder to avoid blocking the monitor
- Use a headset for frequent phone use
  - Most of us will use our cell phone for calls
  - Use the speaker (if possible), your phone's headphones or blue tooth accessory

If you do not have access to all the ideal ergonomic equipment (and most of you won't), here are some alternatives to help keep the aches and pains away.

- Sit close to an outlet when working from a laptop. Avoid stringing the charge cord across the floor to help reduce the chance of a trip and fall.
- If you do not have an ergonomic office/desk chair:
  - Sit with hips and knees at 90° or slightly greater angles
  - Place your feet on the floor or footrest
    - Shoe boxes, step stools and phone books can serve as alternative footrests
  - Sit with the back of your knees clear of the chair
  - Place a small pillow or folded-up blanket on your lower back for lumbar support.
  - Use a pillow or cushion to raise yourself in the chair, if needed
  - Avoid sitting on living room furniture or bed to work from your laptop.
- If working from a laptop, you will be looking down if you place it on the table or desk.
  - Use books, old shoe boxes or other items to raise the laptop to eye level
    - Use an external keyboard and mouse to keep elbows at a 90° angle.
      - Using the laptop keyboard and mouse will cause reaching if the laptop is elevated

**Bad**



**Good**

