March 19, 2020

Although working from home does not always provide the most ideal ergonomic conditions, there are some best practices and behaviors that can be implemented to reduce musculoskeletal risks. As we work from home, follow these best practices, and continue to check this document for periodic updates. To improve your posture, support your body and reduce the risk of discomfort while you’re working on the go, here are a few points to think about:

* Due to potentially awkward posturing, try to break more regularly than you would in the office. Aim for a rest break every 30 minutes – this could help reduce discomfort associated with poor posture.
* If you’re using a tablet computer, avoid typing on the screen while it is flat, or angled. This may hurt your neck and wrist. Use a stand and Bluetooth keyboard to keep your hands in a more comfortable position, this will also raise the screen and help reduce neck strain.
* Using a Laptop? An external mouse will improve your comfort, rather than using the track pad. You may not be able to raise the screen height so will most likely be flexing your neck to look down, over time this could lead to discomfort so make sure you regularly look up, offset your position, and stretch your neck and shoulders.
* If you are carrying your laptop around, use a backpack style bag and wear this on both shoulders. This will help to distribute the weight. Try not to carry unnecessary items which could add more weight to you bag.
* If you are using your mobile phone for email, try to limit this to just reading them. If you need to reply, keep it short – you can type out a longer response when you have access to a larger keyboard. Also avoid using your thumb to type, hold the phone in one hand and type with a finger on the opposite hand – your thumb will thank you!
* If you spend a lot of time driving, make sure you take time to adjust your driving posture. Plan rest breaks on journeys of two hours or more. Please do not use any devices while you are driving.
* If you need to work from the car, sit in the passenger seat; push the seat back to give yourself lots of leg space. Limit the time you work in your car to 10-15 minutes without a rest break.

Remember all things in moderation, don’t switch too quickly and gradually increase your activity levels. It’s important that we aim to sit less, this doesn’t mean stop sitting, just do it less, and move more!

Use the work-from-home ergonomic best practices below to better organize and set up your out-of-office workstation.

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| **Work Stations- Arrange and adjust the computer workstation to promote neutral postures** |
| 1. Head, neck and trunk are in-line with torso and facing forward (not twisted to view documents or screens, with ears directly above the shoulders not bent forward or back). |
| 1. Shoulders and upper arms are relaxed (not elevated), with upper arms in-line with torso. Torso is vertical to slightly reclined, and the lumbar back is fully supported. |
| 1. Elbows are close to the body, forearms are parallel to the floor and about 90 degrees to the upper arm, and wrists and hands are straight in alignment to the forearm. |
| 1. Thighs are approximately parallel to the floor and have sufficient space under the work surface between the thighs and the work table, and the lower legs are approximately perpendicular to the floor. |
| 1. Lower legs and feet have sufficient forward clearance under the work table to allow the user to get close to the keyboard. Feet rest flat on the floor or are supported by a stable footrest. |
| 1. Sharp or square edges that contact hands, wrists, or forearms are padded or rounded. |
| **Seating- Consider these points when evaluating the chair.** |
| 1. Ensure the chair is sturdy with a solid base and adequate lumbar support. If you do not have adequate lumbar support, additional lumbar support can be made with a small pillow, rolled up towel or blanket, or a roll of paper towels. |
| 1. Seat width and depth should accommodate the specific user so that the seat pan is wide enough for ease of egress and deep enough to support the entire thigh. Seat front should be rounded and not press against the back of the legs or knees. |
| 1. Armrests, if available, should support both forearms while performing computer tasks. They should not interfere with movement or positioning of the user, or of the chair under the work table. |
| **Keyboard/Pointing Device- Consider these points when evaluating the keyboard or point device (mouse, trackball, touch pen, roller mouse, joy stick, etc.)** |
| 1. Keyboard should be adjusted to a horizontal or slightly negative slope. |
| 1. Pointing device should be located directly next to the keyboard and as close to the midline of the body as possible so it can be operated without reaching. Pointing device should be easy to activate and the shape/size fits the hand well. |
| 1. If a touch device is used for data input, a detached keyboard and mouse may be ideal if duration of use is more than 2 hours per day, or 30 minutes at a time. |
| 1. There are no sharp or hard edges that contact the wrists and hands. |
| **Monitor- Consider these points when evaluating the monitor and placement (if available).** |
| 1. If a monitor is available, the monitor should be positioned directly in front of the user so they do not have to twist the head or neck, with the top of the screen at or below eye level with the user. The monitor screen should be about 18-20 inches away from the user. |
| 1. If multiple monitors are used, the position of the primary monitor is directly in front of the user and the other monitors are directly beside it. If time is split evenly between monitors, they are next to each other within a comfortable viewing angle with minimal head movement. |
| 1. Glare (from windows or lights) is not reflected on screen causing the user to squint or assume awkward postures to clearly see information on the screen. |
| 1. Monitor brightness and contrast is adjusted for comfort. |
| **Mobile devices (if available)** |
| 1. If laptops are used as a primary computer, they are set up using the same ergonomic principles as desktop computers. |
| 1. If laptops are used outside the office (e.g. on a plane, in a hotel, at home) user postures should be changed regularly to improve neck and wrist posture and duration of time on laptop should be minimized. |
| 1. Laptops used in vehicles are set up at a comfortable angle and infrequently used. The user should take frequent breaks rom computer tasks. |
| 1. A separate keyboard and mouse should be utilized when tablets are used for typing performed for extended periods of time. |
| 1. Tablets and smartphones should be used with the shoulders relaxed, arms positioned near the torso, and neck in a neutral posture without excessive neck bending to view the screen. |
| **Accessories (if available)** |
| 1. A document holder, if available, is stable and large enough to hold documents (paper, binders, or books), and is placed at about the same height and distance as the monitor screen. |
| 1. A wrist/palm rest, if available, should match the front height of the keyboard and should be padded and free of square or sharp edges that contact the wrist. A rest should also allow the user to keep forearms, wrists, and hands straight and in-line when using the keyboard/pointing device. |
| 1. If a telephone is available, it should be positioned close to the work area to avoid excessive reach. The telephone should be used with head upright and shoulders relaxed. If a headset is used, it should be a comfortable fit. |
| 1. Use a footrest, if needed, if the feet are not flat on the floor because the keyboard and monitor do not sufficient adjustability. If used, the footrest should be angled and support both feet. |
| **General Concepts** |
| 1. Ensure the workstation and equipment have sufficient adjustability so users are in a safe/supportive working posture and can easily make occasional changes in posture while performing computer tasks. |
| 1. Items that must be accessed frequently are within easy reach, generally with the elbows close to the body. Items used occasionally can be at nearly full arm reach. |
| 1. Computer tasks should be organized in a way that allows users to vary keyboard tasks with other work activities, or provides an opportunity for micro-breaks or recovery pauses while at the computer work station. Prolonged sitting or standing should be avoided. |
| 1. Lighting levels should be adjustable for differing tasks. Brighter task lights should be used for paperwork and lower lighting should be used for general computer work. |