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Still working from home? Time to give your employees an ergonomics refresher

Half of Colorado companies have employees working from home at least half the time due to COVID-19. This remote work can be a pain in the neck — literally. Nearly a year into the pandemic, chiropractors nationwide have reported a surge in injuries related to telecommuting.

Many employees lack formal workstations in their homes. Too many hours spent working while lying on a bed or lounging in unsupportive chairs can lead to neck, back, wrist and shoulder pain. Even those with workstations may not have optimized them to avoid strains and pains.

Ergonomics can curb such injuries. Ergonomics involves changing your workplace to fit your needs and decreasing discomfort while increasing efficiency. It could include, for instance, adjusting the height of your computer monitor to avoid neck strain.

We've compiled 10 ergonomics tips and resources to help you improve your own habits and check in on your employees working remotely. (You may continue referencing these tips long after the pandemic wanes, too. Many companies plan to let workers continue working remotely, noting the psychological and productivity benefits as well as the appeal to potential employees.)

Ergonomics tips and resources

1. **Conduct a self-assessment:** To determine potential problem areas, have your employees conduct an ergonomics self-assessment using our office ergonomics workstation checklist.
2. **Adjust your laptop to create a more ergonomic workstation:** If you have an external keyboard and mouse, place the laptop on a sturdy stack of books or on a laptop riser so the top of the screen is level with your horizontal line of sight. See Pinnacol's do's and don'ts on setting up your workstation at home.
3. **Please be seated:** Find a chair with a high backrest and preferably some height adjustment. If additional padding and support are needed, use pillows or a thick, rolled-up towel fastened to the backrest for a makeshift lumbar support.
4. **Staying neutral means less stress:** Set up your workstation to allow for a neutral posture to reduce soft tissue and joint stress. When seated, the lower back should be supported and slightly reclined, the forearms parallel to the floor and the chin should be level. Read our tips on neutral seated posture.

5. **Stand and deliver:** Standing and working at your computer intermittently can reduce static loading to the body from sitting in one posture for too long. Review this [sit-stand workstation](#) resource for guidance on proper setup. Also remember to alternate between seated and standing work, e.g., 45 minutes of seated work followed by 30 minutes of standing work, then repeat this cycle.
6. **Give me a break:** Avoid sitting or standing in one posture for too long. Take short (2-3-minute breaks) every hour and walk. If you're on a long call or meeting and can't leave the room, [perform a few stretches to reduce muscle tightness and improve circulation](#).
7. **Don't be a pain in the neck:** When using the phone, avoid cradling the phone between the head and shoulder. Utilize the hands-free speaker whenever possible or provide earbuds or a quality headset to maintain a neutral head posture.
8. **Document your work:** Use a clipboard or three-ring binder as a makeshift document holder when you enter data from hard copy documents.
9. **Check in frequently:** Work-from-home situations are often fluid. People may change their workstations or relocate elsewhere in the house, so you should perform regular check-ins to identify potential problems early.
10. **Safety first:** Reduce the risk of a fire or electrical damage to equipment and trips and falls by using our [home office safety checklist to perform an inspection](#).

If you have questions about ergonomics and working from home, we're here to help you. Explore our [Lifting and Ergonomics](#) resources or [contact a Pinnacol safety consultant](#) about your questions.

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