

Editor's Note: Safety Group Program Monthly Newsletter Article — March 2022

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Give Your At-Home Workspace an Ergonomic Makeover

Two years into the pandemic, working from home has become the norm. The percentage of people [working from home doubled in 2021](#), and by 2025, nearly three-quarters of the workforce may work from home at least five days a month.

Making sure your workers have ergonomic home offices helps them perform their jobs better. A safe, efficient workspace benefits everyone. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, [almost a third of dollars spent on workers' compensation](#) stem from musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) associated with improper ergonomics. Improved ergonomics can reduce injuries and boost your company's productivity.

Help your workers increase at-home workplace health and safety by sharing the tips in our "[How to set up your office](#)" video, which explains how to assess the five primary elements of an at-home office for optimal ergonomics. Then read our bonus tips on desk organization at the end of this article.

1. Chair

Adjust the height of the chair so your feet rest on the floor. But don't stop there. Also:

- Set the backrest back 5 to 10 degrees to support the natural S-curve in your back.
- Move the seat pan forward or backward to provide a 1-to-2-inch gap between the back of your knees and the front of the seat.
- Raise or lower the armrests so that your arms form an L with your elbows by your side..
- Bring the armrests forward or backward so neither elbow rests on the armrests.

Position the chair close enough to the desk that you don't need to reach for your keyboard or mouse. Use a footrest if your feet can't reach the floor.

2. Workstation

Ergonomic desks can guard your elbows, shoulders and wrists against overuse injuries. Use this quick exercise to find the optimal position at your workstation:

- Hold your arms at your side while sitting in your chair. Keeping your elbows down, bend your forearms.
- Face your hands parallel to the floor and move your chair into your workstation.
- Do you need to move your arms up or down to type on your keyboard or reach your mouse? Then readjust the chair so you don't reach. Also, adjust make sure your forearms are straight or reach your mouse? Then readjust the chair so you don't reach. Also, adjust make sure your forearms are straight or your elbows are at 90 degrees.

3. Keyboard

Proper positioning of the arms can reduce contact stress on the soft tissues in your wrists and forearms. Your elbows should bend at 90 degrees when you type on your keyboard.

Your wrists should stay flat, forming straight lines from your elbows to your fingertips.

Pretend like you're playing the piano. Relax your shoulders while you type, and keep your fingers floating above the keyboard.

4. Mouse

Using the mouse correctly will reduce stress on your wrist, elbow, neck and shoulders. A few do's and don'ts:

- Do keep a loose grip on the mouse.
- Don't use a lot of effort to move the mouse.
- Do move the mouse from your elbow rather than from your wrist.
- Don't bend your wrist when you grip the mouse.

5. Monitors

Do you use two monitors? Here's the secret to an ergonomic setup: Place the monitors at angles and align yourself so that when you look straight ahead, you see where the monitors meet. Keep the tops of the monitors at eye level, and use books or risers to move them up if you need extra height.

If the majority of your work is one on one of your two monitors, align yourself so your primary monitor is straight ahead and the other is positioned off to the side. They should be as close to each other as possible and angled towards you.

Done with your ergonomic workstation setup? Now organize your desk

Preventing awkward movements can also cut down on MSDs. Position the things on your desk so that you can reach them without straining. If you spend a lot of time on the telephone, use a hands-free set to avoid neck pain. If you have employees who input data, encourage them to set the data documents on a holder or prop them on a three-ring binder to avoid neck strain.

Discover other tips for keeping your employees safe on the [Pinnacol blog](#). You can also email a Pinnacol safety consultant at safetyoncall@pinnacol.com to ask questions about ergonomics.

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