Ergonomic Tips for Remote Working

Developed by Jennifer Quenette, Associate Director of Public Health and Safety

Many employees are currently finding themselves adjusting quite quickly to a new environment as they set themselves up to work from home. The following information on how to set up that workspace as efficiently and ergonomically as you can, will help you get through this period as safely as possible:

- Workspace away from noise, distractions and devoted specifically to work needs
- Workspace maintained free from slip, trip and fall hazards and in safe conditions at all times (think about toys, pets, clothing, etc. and keep doorways unobstructed)
- Workspace capable of supporting and accommodating electronic office and supporting equipment needs and related materials
- Sufficient electrical outlets that are accessible, grounded, covered and in working order
- Equipment placed close to electrical outlets and cords/wires placed to avoid potential trips/falls
- Computer desk height at approximately 26 to 29 inches from the floor
- Fully adjustable chair to ensure that arms are at 90-degree angle to the keyboard, knees are at 90-degree angle, feet are flat on the floor or on a footrest, and backrest provides support to the lumbar curve of the operator's back and waist
- Wrists maintained in the neutral position when keying and mousing
- Adequate space under the desk for lateral movement
- Monitor is adjusted so that the top of the screen is at or below the user's eye level
- Images on the screen are sharp, easy to read, and there is no glare
- Lighting is not so bright to cause glare or so dim that it causes strain when reading the screen or reviewing documents
- Task lighting is available for source documents and positioned to avoid glare
- Working smoke detector, home multipurpose fire extinguisher and evacuation plan so you know what to do in the event of a fire
- Avoid cradling your phone in your neck while on the computer; use your speaker phone feature

Employees should remember to take frequent breaks (breaks are definitely emphasized when using a laptop or other ergonomically-compromised work station), to rest their eyes, stretch and get up and move. Also, remember that sitting on ones couch while on your laptop should be avoided as it places the body in a posture that will inevitably result in problems. For those that could use a few DIY hacks I would recommend the following:

- Try using a small box or crate for a footrest if you don't have one at home – maintain that 90-degree angle to your knees to avoid any pulling on your low back
- Explore the use of cushions and pillows to provide support when necessary
- If needed, use a rolled up towel for added spine support. The towel should run the length of the spine – place it between the shoulder blades to encourage a more upright posture when seated.

Remember your neutral posture – elbows, hips and knees at 90-degrees, feet flat on the floor or on a footrest. Wrists neutral and hands floating over your keyboard.

If you are experiencing issues or have questions related to ergonomics within your remote worksite, please feel free to contact Jennifer Quenette, Associate Director of Public Health and Safety at jennifer.quenette@ndsu.edu or 701.231.6740.