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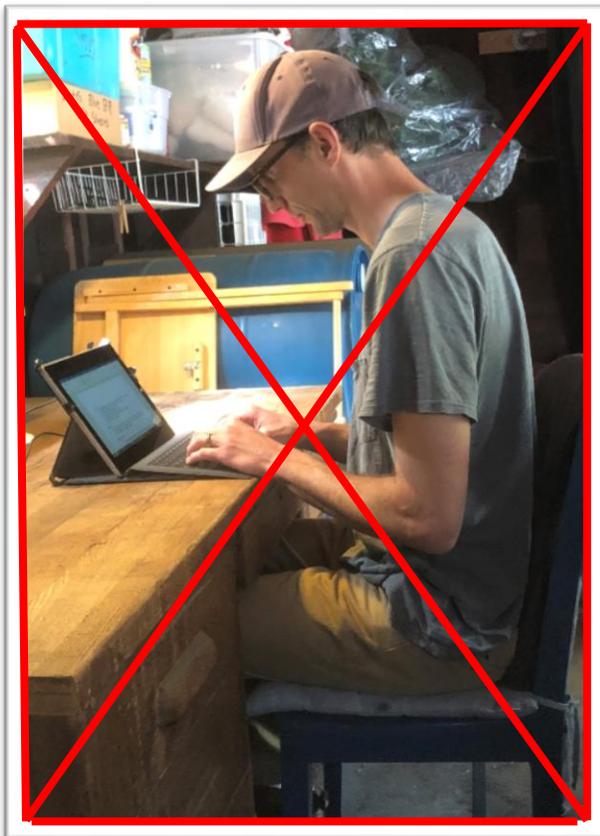
# SAFETY ALERT

No. 20-01

HOME OFFICE ERGONOMICS

May 2020

With the outbreak of COVID-19, nearly every aspect of our lives has changed, especially the way we work. Many of us are working from home at quickly assembled workstations that commonly entail a laptop at the dining room table, on the couch or in bed. This Safety Alert will guide you in setting up a workstation at home and implementing good work habits to minimize the physical stress on your body.



Notice some of the problems demonstrated in the photo to the left.

**Problem #1:** The neck is bent forward to look at the monitor.

- Solution - Raise the monitor height to near eye level to keep the neck upright.

**Problem #2:** The shoulders are collapsing forward.

- Solution - Sit back in the chair and maintain the natural curve of the spine

**Problem #3:** Forearms should be parallel to the floor.

- Solution - Use an external keyboard and reposition arms

**Problem #4:** Pressure (contact stress) on the palms.

- Solution - Raise the hands when typing. Rest palms in lap when pausing.

## Standard Ergonomic Guidelines:

### Chair:

- Use a comfortable chair that allows your feet to rest directly on the floor. If using a hard chair, use a cushion and/or neatly folded blanket to sit on and for your back rest.
- If your chair does not permit your feet to rest firmly on the floor, try using something around the house as a footrest. (E.g., stable box, sturdy books, shoe box, a ream of paper)
- Sit with your hips all the way back to the backrest to support your lower back.
- Sit upright, maintaining the natural curve of your spine.
- Keep your elbows at your side. This will help you relax your shoulders.
- Do not lean forward on your elbows.

### Monitor:

- The top of your monitor should be at or near eye level. If you are working from a laptop, consider using an external keyboard that can be plugged in with a USB cable if available. Then, find a stable object, such as a box that can support your laptop at a raised level.

### Keyboard and mouse:

- Position the keyboard and mouse on the same level surface that allows your forearms to be parallel to the floor (e.g., desktop, keyboard tray, a partially open desk drawer)
- If working on a desktop that is too high to keep your forearms parallel to the floor, keep the keyboard and mouse right at the edge of the desk. This allows you to sit back in your chair and avoid uncomfortable contact stress by resting your wrists on the desktop.
- Take frequent, short breaks from typing or computer work to let your wrists and shoulders rest.
- Try new positions for your equipment often and learn if each position creates relief or discomfort.
- Positioning the keyboard directly on your lap may provide relief or avoid discomfort in your wrists.



*Notice how the position of the keyboard in the three photos affects the angle of the forearms relative to the floor. Forearms are best positioned parallel to the floor.*

#### Posture:

- Don't slouch, but keep your shoulders relaxed.
- Keep your elbows close to your body (this is critical to comfort).

#### Breaks:

- Take at least a five-minute break away from your screen every half hour to hour.
- Take 1 to 2 minute breaks every 15 to 20 minutes, which should be used for some quick stretching."

#### Eye care:

- Enlarge (i.e., zoom) your font.
  - Imagine you are reading a book. The words should be large enough and close enough to your eyes that you are comfortable.
- Every 20 minutes take 20 seconds to look away from your screen and at something 20 feet away from you. (20-20-20 rule)
- Position monitor perpendicular to a light source like a window to reduce glare. Avoid positioning your monitor in front of or behind the light source.

#### Phone usage:

- Use the speaker phone or headphones to make calls and avoid neck strain. Don't hold the phone between your ear and shoulder.
- When video conferencing, use the audio on your computer instead of your phone. This removes the temptation to pick up your phone which can lead to awkward positions.

#### Other tips and reminders:

- Give yourself time to adjust to your new work set-up.
- Be creative with your set up. Use items around your house, such as books, to raise monitors.
- Adjust your equipment to serve your task (e.g., mouse use versus keyboard use).



*Notice how the keyboard and mouse are positioned differently in each of the photos. On the left, the setup is for high frequency mouse use. On the right, the keyboard is positioned for high use. Feel free to re-adjust to either set up throughout your day, as your tasks change.*

- Control and manage cords to eliminate tripping hazards in walkways and under your workstation.
- Maintain room for your feet under your workstation.
- Avoid resting wrists on hard surfaces. A soft hand towel or wash cloth can be used for a temporary wrist rest.

**Resources:**

[Video: Ergonomics: Working From Home, a video by Sedgwick, CMS.](#)

[Ergonomic Resources from the California State Compensation Insurance Fund](#) – Provides very brief and effective videos on monitor placement, chair adjustment, stretching and more.

[Cal OSHA Office Ergonomics](#) – Provides a useful diagnostic checklist with solutions.

Implementing the safe work practices described above will significantly reduce strain and discomfort while working at home.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at (213) 241-3199 or <https://achieve.lausd.net/oehs>.