

Covid-19 Working at Home Safety and Ergonomic Tips

Due to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses are mandating work-at-home policies for an extended period to protect their employees and minimize the potential spread of the virus.

However, many employees have never worked from home. Even if they have, it's not been for as many hours or days, potentially combined with family duties, as now anticipated. Most are likely not aware of the small changes they can make to their homework environment for a more comfortable, safe, and productive work-at-home experience.

Our board-certified Ergonomists and safety professionals developed and recommend the following work-at-home best practices that can be shared with your employees, whether working from home on a shift basis or full time now.

Safety Tips

- Do not overload electrical outlets to avoid fire risk.
- Be careful with extension/power cords to minimize tripping hazards.
- While working, use a secure Wi-Fi connection and company VPN access to keep sensitive data from prying eyes.
- Keep laptop and equipment in a secure place afterhours that can be protected from damage or theft.
- If you must see a client, try to meet virtually using teleconferencing services like WebEx, Zoom or NetMeeting.

Ergonomics Tips

- Use a sturdy chair that can be adjusted. Ideally, the forearms should be parallel to the floor when keying.
- Place a small pillow in your lower back while sitting to maintain the natural curve of your spine.
- Refrain from sitting on very soft couches; they do not support the body evenly during extended sitting.
- Alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day (about every hour) to reduce excessive stress on the lower back and legs while sitting.
- Take short micro-breaks (approximately 2 minutes in length) every hour to stretch and move your body.
- Use an external mouse to promote more neutral wrist postures.
- Place key objects — such as your phone, mouse and printed materials — close to your body to minimize reaching.

Wellness Tips

- Maintain regular communication with your supervisor, this is beneficial from both a personal health and business standpoint to avoid isolation.
- Set yourself up in a distraction free space so that you are able to focus on work
- Manage your diary so that you have a set start and end time as well as breaks throughout the day. This will provide balance and allow you to remain productive
- If you are not used to working remotely, know it will take some time to adjust to your new work location

In addition to these best practices, you also may want to consider providing your employees with video tutorials and helplines to assist with setups and professionally address any physical discomfort issues.

With or without a pandemic, work-at-home is becoming more common, and for many employers and employees, it comes as a significant change. Be patient with yourself and them as you all navigate this new world of work. And be sure periodically check-in on their wellbeing, during team meetings or on an individual basis. Now, more than ever, they will need your support and guidance.

For more information, contact your Marsh representative or:

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