

Ergonomic Tips for the Remote Employee COVID-19 Pandemic Response



In response to *Stay at Home* orders by state and local authorities, many districts have employees working remotely. While orders from local public health officials during the pandemic are temporary, an office setup, even remotely, should include good ergonomics.

- **Designated Space**

Create a space that can be dedicated for computer use. A desk or kitchen table would be ideal. Sitting on a bed or couch for long periods of time should be avoided.

- **Monitor**

If using a laptop try to place the screen about an arms length away (18"-30") and keep eye level within the top 1/3 of the screen. If you need to elevate the laptop, be sure not to block the vent on the bottom of the laptop. The use of an external monitor would be ideal.

- **Keyboard and Mouse**

Try to avoid using the laptop keyboard and mouse, as it would be difficult to maintain good ergonomic posture. If at all possible, use an external keyboard and mouse. The work surface should be at elbow height and wrists should be in a neutral position. Avoid extended reaches.

- **Chair**

If using a chair that cannot be adjusted, i.e. kitchen chair, remember to use a cushion to sit on and a rolled up towel for lower back support.

- **Phone**

Use a headset or speakerphone when making/taking calls.

- **Lighting**

Ensure proper lighting and avoid direct sunlight hitting the monitor to reduce eye strain due to glare.

- **Plan your Day**

Establish a schedule, i.e. set a routine. It's a workday, try to eliminate distractions as best as possible.

- **Breaks**

Take regular breaks away from your work area. If you are able, take a walk or do stretches. Below are examples of stretches that can be done at home. **Remember to hydrate and change your position regularly!**

- **Training**

Take online training on [TargetSolutions](#). A good refresher course is **General Office Ergonomics**. If you want CEUs, then take the timed **Water Industry General Office Ergonomics** class. A lot of information in this training can be applied to a home office setting.

- **Wellness**

Information can be found on the ACWA JPIA's website [Wellness page](#).

- **Additional Resources**

[CCOHS Answers on Home Office](#) – Simple outline of risks and solutions for home office.

[NIH Office Checklist](#) – Office ergonomic checklist

[Back School Videos](#) – Various ergonomic specific videos

[Letter of Interpretation](#) - OSHA explanation of employers responsibility for safety and health hazards for employees working at home.

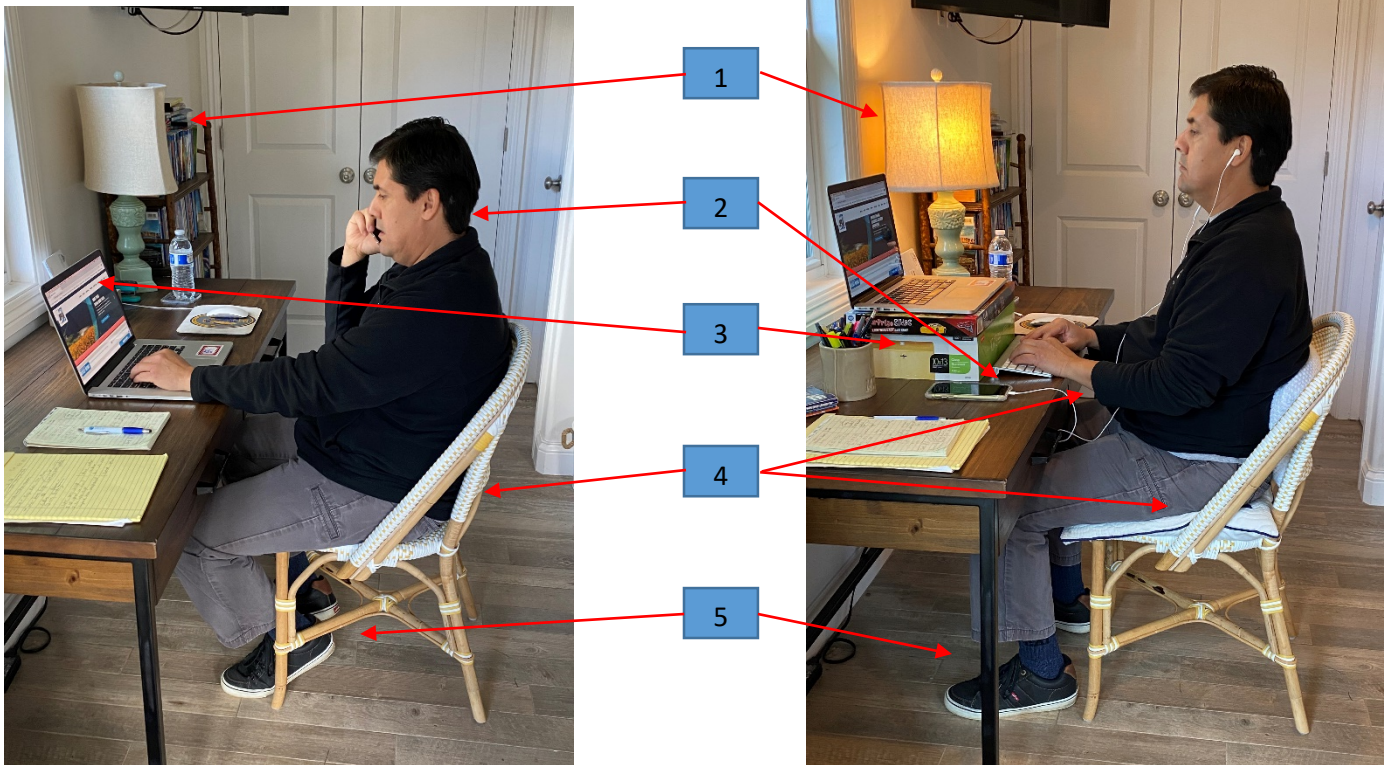
- **Vehicle Ergonomic Resources**

[Mobile Office](#) – Ergonomics in the Mobile Office

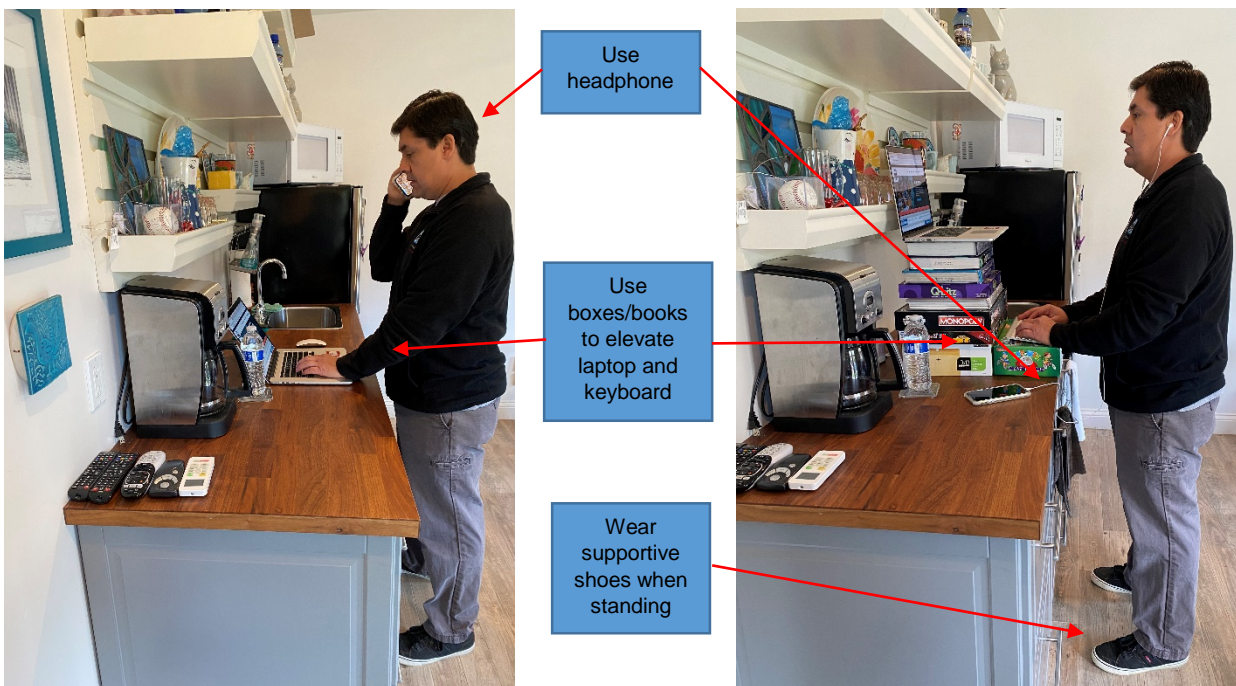
[CRE-MSD](#) – In-Vehicle computing Ergonomics checklist

[HAVIS](#) – Mobile Computing Ergonomics

Using a table or counter with your equipment at the right height for you will place the least amount of strain on your body. Risk of injury decreases and you can work longer and more efficiently.



1. Ensure you have proper lighting.
2. Use headphones or speakerphone to reduce neck and shoulder strain.
3. Use a box and/or books to elevate laptop to eye level to reduce neck strain. Remember not to block the vent on the bottom of the laptop.
4. Use a cushion to sit on and a towel to provide lumbar support. The cushion can also be used to provide the proper height. The keyboard should be at elbow height and your wrists in a neutral position. Avoid extended reaches.
5. Keep feet flat on floor or use boxes to provide foot support.



Stretches for people who work at computers

REMEMBER TO HOLD EACH STRETCH FOR 5-10 SECONDS AND BREATHE

These stretches are for your benefit to increase your flexibility and comfort. You may feel tension and tightness while performing some of these, but you should not feel pain. If you feel pain, back off the stretch a little until it feels more comfortable. If you have a current injury or feel uncomfortable doing these stretches, please check with your caregiver prior to continuing these exercises to ensure they are appropriate for you.

1 REACH FOR THE SUN

Stand up and raise your arms above your head. Keeping your feet on the ground, inhale deeply and reach up further, feeling your spine lengthen.



2 NECK LENGTHEN

Sitting or standing up straight, pull chin backward so your ears are above your shoulders and you have a double chin. Hold & breathe. Relax & repeat.



3 LATERAL NECK

Place one hand behind your back or hold the bottom of a chair. The other hand gently pulls your ear to the shoulder. Hold & breathe. Repeat other side.



4 BETWEEN-THE-SHOULDER-BLADES

Sit or stand up straight. Reach forward at shoulder level and grasp both hands together; turn them out. Keep chin tucked in. Gently pull arms forward. Hold 10 seconds. Relax and repeat.



5 EAGLE

Cross your right arm over top of your left arm at the elbow. Bend elbows to 90 degrees and turn palms towards each other. Raise interlocked arms up towards the level with shoulder until you feel the stretch between the shoulder blades. Hold 10 seconds. Relax and repeat other side.



6 UPPER SHOULDER

Gently push one arm at the elbow across your body at shoulder level. Hold and breathe. Repeat other side.



7 CHEST PULL

Bring arms out to the side, keeping elbows at shoulder height. Squeeze shoulder blades together and hold 10 seconds. Relax and repeat.



8 FINGER WEB

Make a fist with your hands and squeeze. Then split your fingers apart and hold a few seconds. Shake them out. Relax and repeat.



9 FINGERS-UP

Stretch arm straight forward and turn fingers up. Gently pull the palm of the hand toward you and hold 5-10 seconds. Relax and repeat other hand.



10 FINGERS-DOWN

One arm straight ahead, elbow straight, turn fingers down. Gently pull back of hand toward you. Hold & breathe. Repeat other hand.



11 FINGER PULL

In this yoga stretch, start with the index finger and gently pull it back with the other hand, feeling the stretch into the palm. Hold for 5 seconds and then move to the middle finger and repeat. Continue until each finger on one hand, including the thumb, has been done. Repeat with the opposite hand.



12 BACK EXTENSION

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent. Hands on your hips and eyes facing forward (keep your neck neutral). Gently arch your back backwards and hold 5-10 seconds. Breathe. Relax and repeat.



13 QUADRICEPS & HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

Holding onto something, grab your ankle with the other hand. Push your hip forward and hold 5-10 seconds. Relax and repeat other leg.



14 SHOULDER SHRUG/RETRACT

Raise both shoulders up towards your ears, pull them back, and then push shoulder blades DOWN into your back pockets. Hold under your chair for 5-10 seconds. Relax and repeat.



15 HIP & GLUT STRETCH

Sitting down, cross one foot over the opposite knee. Keeping the raised knee out to the side and the hips level, gently push the raised knee down. Hold 5-10 seconds. Relax and repeat other leg.



16 PALMING

Close your eyes and place your hands over top. Relax your eyes. Hold for 10-20 seconds.

