

## **TOOLBOX TOPIC**

### **Working from Home – Tips to Stay Healthy**

Many of us are working from home during this unprecedented time. We could be combining work with family care requirements, so let's talk about some of the small things we can do to make the combination work. If you are not used to working remotely, it will take a bit of time to adjust - but you can be successful.

Taking our computers with us when we head for home means that we need to be focused on using the computers in a way that doesn't lead to injury. Your at-home work station should be a dedicated work space if possible with a desk, adjustable chair, key board, mouse and place to put your computer that puts the screen at eye level. Most of us don't have all of these but it is possible to use the mouse and keyboard and a stack of books or a box to bring the screen up to eye level where we are working.

Let's start with some basics:

Don't overload the electrical outlets to avoid a fire and eliminate the extension cords to minimize trip hazards. Those were pretty easy, what else should we look at for our new work area

The chair that you will be sitting in is key to keeping your body in balance. The seat should keep your thighs parallel to the floor and your feet should be flat on the floor. You can put a small pillow at your lower back to keep the natural curve of your spine in line.

Your computer screen should be an arm's length away from you and it should be at eye level. Working on a laptop that is on a table top can be a real pain in the neck, so try to set up a work area that doesn't require you to look down all the time. Use a box or a stack of books to get it at the perfect distance and height. The keyboard and the mouse will come into play now, just like at the office, this equipment allows us to sit up straight and do our work.

Place your support equipment; cell phone, papers, mouse, etc. close to your body to minimize the need to reach for things. If you use the phone or conference frequently, use a head set or blue tooth to help maintain your posture without having to twist to reach something.

Now that you're set, let's talk about stretching and taking micro breaks! Because it is easy to get wrapped up in what you're doing, you forget to get up and MOVE. Sitting for too long can lead to sore muscles and stiff joints. So once an hour (set a reminder) get up and stretch and move for about 2 minutes. Side to side and standing stretches are great to keep your body tuned up and moving. These micro breaks help relieve muscle strain and fatigue, improves your breathing and circulation which helps improve attention and engagement in the project that you are working on.

Keeping in contact with your supervisor will keep you in contact with what is happening in the bigger world. Keep a schedule so that you have a start and stop time as well as breaks throughout your work day. It may take a bit of getting used to, but we can make this happen – TOGETHER.

**BE SMART. BE CAREFUL. BE PRODUCTIVE. BE FLEXIBLE. BE CONSIDERATE.**