



HOME ERGONOMICS GUIDE: WORKING SAFELY FROM HOME

Answering the Questions: *What is Ergonomics and Why is it Important?*

What is Ergonomics?

Ergonomics is **the study of how to improve the fit between the physical demands of a work environment and the employees who perform the work**. The goal of ergonomics is to increase worker safety, comfort, and productivity. Though the proper application of ergonomics has become more common in an office setting, applying the same principles to a work-from-home setting can be a challenge.



Why is Ergonomics Important ?



Implementing ergonomic solutions can make employees feel more comfortable and increase productivity. Employee actions can contribute to the development of chronic or temporary injuries or disorders throughout their body.

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Musculoskeletal Disorders are the most common types of injuries or disorders resulting from improper ergonomics. These injuries are of the muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, cartilage, or spinal disks.

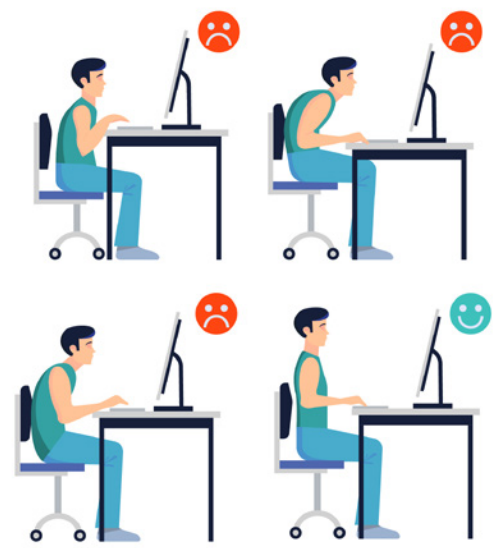


Contributing Factors:

- Sitting for long periods of time
- Bending, twisting, or leaning
- Maintaining improper postures
- Performing repetitive movements
- Making direct contact between joints and hard surfaces for long periods of time

Symptoms:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Cramping
- Tingling or numbness
- Stiffness
- Weakness
- Throbbing
- Clicking sounds at joints



Home Solutions:

- Use a stand, box, or riser to make sure the top of your computer screen is at eye-level and an arm's length away
- Make sure your wrists are straight from hand to wrist when typing
- Use a wrist rest to avoid contact stress and keeps wrists straight and NOT angled upward
- Elbows should be at a 90-degree angle when typing
- Attach a keyboard to your laptop
- Use a mouse and mouse pad
- Use a headset
- Sit on a firm seat pan or seat cushion
- Make sure your spine and neck are straight at all times
- Alternate between using a footrest and placing feet flat on the floor

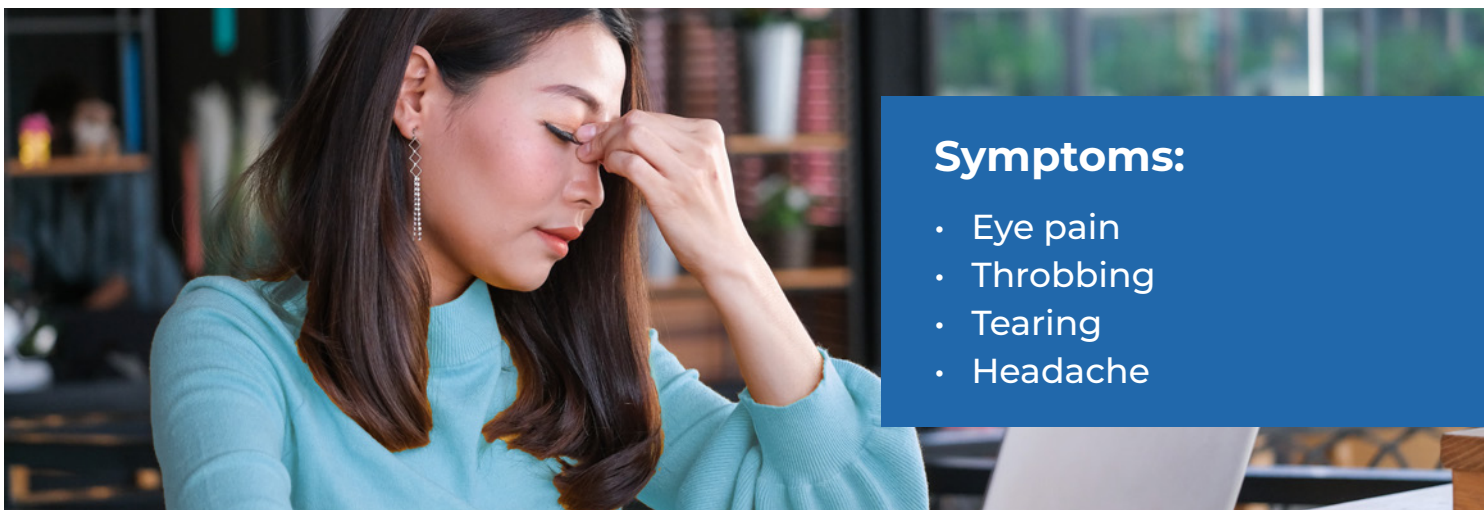
Computer Vision Syndrome

Computer Vision Syndrome is a form of eye exhaustion resulting from eyes working too hard to adjust to different locations and colors on a screen quickly. It is characterized by the presence of associated symptoms and is generally considered a temporary condition.



Contributing Factors:

Continuous screen time



Symptoms:

- Eye pain
- Throbbing
- Tearing
- Headache



Home Solutions:

- Adjust screen brightness
- Adjust display setting
- Use anti-glare cover
- Maintain top of screen at eye level
- Take micro-breaks (10 seconds) from screens, lights, and reading

Numbness or Swelling

Sitting for long periods of time or in a position where pressure is placed behind the knees or heels can sometimes lead to a sensation of numbness and tingling.



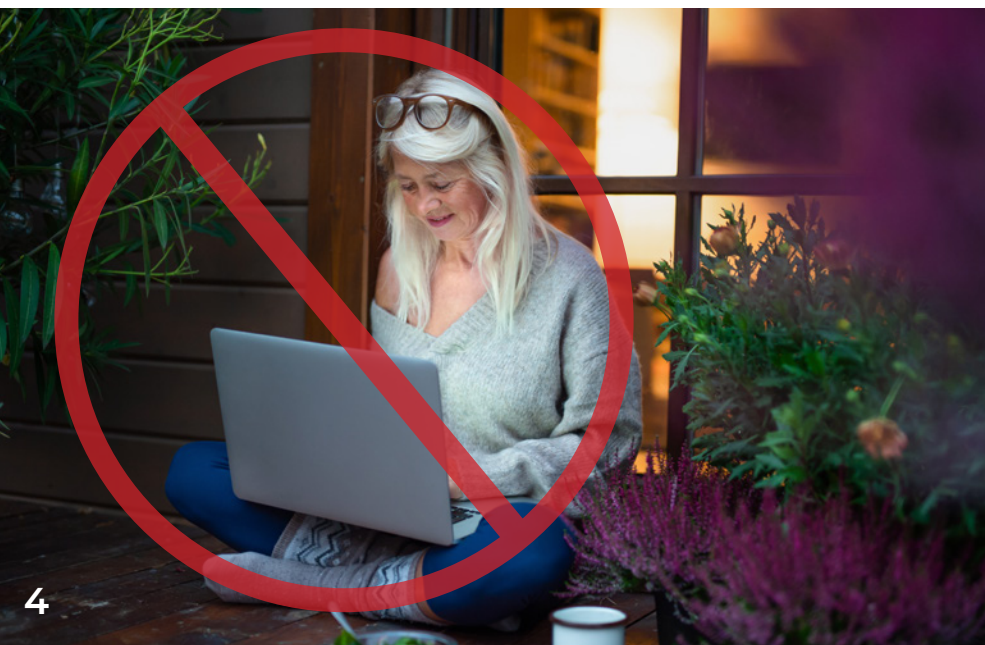
Contributing Factors:

- Sitting for long periods of time or in a position where pressure is placed behind the knee or on the heels
- Sitting with your legs crossed in a “butterfly position”



Home Solutions:

- Change your position hourly or take a micro-break, and stand up and stretch for 10 seconds to encourage blood flow
- Alternate between elevating your feet and placing them flat on the floor
- Avoid crossing your legs or sitting “butterfly style”
- Make sure the back of your seat-pan or cushion isn’t pushing up against the back of your knees. You should be able to place two fingers behind your knees and the edge of the pan or cushion



Desktop Computer Ergonomics



Laptop Computer Ergonomics at a Desk or Table

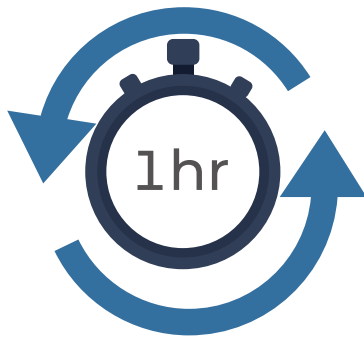


Laptop Ergonomics

The key difference between working from your lap rather than at a desk, is the need to use the laptop keyboard rather than an attached keyboard or mouse. This often results in the inability to raise the laptop to a height that accommodates the ergonomic needs of your elbows and neck at the same time. A good home solution is to use a laptop riser or stand and attach a mouse and keyboard. If a riser or stand is unavailable, a cardboard box or stack of books can be used to adjust the eye level of your screen. However, make sure to exercise caution to avoid damaging equipment or causing injury. If you are using your laptop without ergonomic equipment, it is recommended to change your position once every hour. Alternate between the time the laptop is raised to a position where your neck is straight and the laptop is at the height of your brow, and the time the laptop is positioned lower at the level of your elbows. Please remember that if you choose to invest in equipment for use in your home, this expense will not be reimbursed.



Readjust, Move, and Decompress!



Adjusting your position, walking, stretching, or exercising periodically during your workday is essential. Resetting hourly by taking ten second micro-breaks to stretch or walk in place can help to prevent injury, reduce stress, and increase productivity.



Benefits:

- Increase blood flow to joints and muscles
- Improve flexibility
- Reduce stress
- Re-energize your mind and body
- Reduce contact stress
- Prevent weight gain
- Improve cardiac health
- Reduce eye stress
- Reduce risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders over time



Home Solutions:

Apply healthy coping mechanisms that work for you!

- Adjusting your position hourly
- Exercising or going outdoors during your lunch break
- Performing guided meditation or mindfulness activities found on the Internet or by downloading a phone application such as *Headspace*, which has partnered with the State of New York to help employees reduce stress levels

Health Home Ergonomics Checklist for Injury Prevention and Productivity

- ✓ Care for your eyes: wear your glasses, check lighting; adjust screen-glare, font size, display settings, height and distance of monitor; and take hourly micro-breaks for your eyes by closing them for a count of ten seconds.
- ✓ Support your joints: use a mouse, and wrist and arm rests. Make sure your wrists are in a relaxed position forming a straight line from wrist to fingers.
- ✓ Make sure your back and neck are straight. Don't slouch or lean, and use a lumbar pillow, if necessary.
- ✓ Change your position every two hours if working from a desk and one hour if working on your lap from a couch or other similar setting.
- ✓ Make a schedule of tasks to complete each day including ergonomic micro-breaks and repositioning, and stick to it.
- ✓ Reduce background noise or use a headset.
- ✓ Go for a walk or be physically active during your lunch break.
- ✓ Try working in different rooms to change your scenery.
- ✓ Leave your work area to eat meals.

Visit: <https://www.headspace.com/ny>.

Resources

Boston University

Tips on Home Ergonomics

<http://www.bu.edu/articles/2020/10-ergonomics-dos-and-donts-for-those-now-working-from-home/>

Environmental Health and Safety Today

Ergonomics Recommendations

<https://www.ehstoday.com/health/article/21127667/ergonomics-recommendations-for-remote-work>

Headspace

Science-based meditation and mindfulness

<https://www.headspace.com/ny>

New York State Office of Mental Health

Mental Health Resources

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/covid-19-resources.html>
COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314



NYS & CSEA Partnership