



Social Distancing for Employees in the Workplace

Social distancing means deliberately increasing the physical space between you and another person, ideally six feet. This is the most important action we can take to slow the spread of COVID-19, commonly called coronavirus. By staying at least six feet away from others, you dramatically reduce the chance of coming into contact with any virus they may shed through coughing or sneezing.

Some employees in operations-critical positions may be needed to report to the workplace. Ask them to observe the following precautions as recommended by CDC and OSHA.

Tips for Employees

- Practice six-foot social distancing in every situation possible
- Avoid using public transportation to commute if possible
- Avoid situations at or outside work where more than 10 people are gathered
- Use phone, email or conferencing technology instead of face-to-face interactions
- Postpone travel plans and arrange alternatives such as conferencing
- Do not shake hands
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or apply hand sanitizer immediately after coming in contact with another person
- If wearing gloves, wash your hands immediately after taking them off
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow, and immediately wash hands or apply hand sanitizer
- Keep frequently touched areas clean, for example, phones, computers, desktops and other equipment
- Do not use other workers' equipment

Tips for Supervisors/Managers

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home
- Send home employees who appear to be sick or become sick during the day
- Do not require a doctor's note to validate need for sick leave or returning to work
- Allow flexibility for employees who have a sick family member to care for
- Ask companies that provide contract or temporary employees to follow your policy

Employers can get information about actions to take in the OSHA publication *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19*.

Sources:

Coronavirus, Social Distancing and Self Quarantine

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):
Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers

OSHA: How to Protect Yourself in the Workplace
During a Pandemic



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Social Engagement While Working Remotely

Working remotely can come with many challenges for employees who may not be used to working away from their coworkers for extended periods of time. For some, the interpersonal interaction is a major part of their work experience and a strong workplace culture.

Fortunately, there are many ways that employees can interact with their coworkers even while working remotely to stay connected and engaged.

Make sure to replicate regular weekly or daily check-ins and meetings with a phone call or virtual meeting:

- **Set up regular check-ins every week to stay connected with your team or supervisor**

It can be difficult to adjust to losing daily social interactions. There are many ways that your team can replace those valuable spontaneous conversations and connections with just a few adjustments:

- **If you don't already have one, consider using a chat app or program like Jabber, Slack or Yammer to connect with colleagues and virtually 'drop by'**
- **Try a remote breakfast, lunch or coffee catch up with a colleague or friend over video**

Social distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation. Take staff activities virtual with these suggestions and get creative:

- **Organize a remote game such as Words with Friends or a virtual walking challenge**
- **Share photos of individual remote workspaces**
- **Share reading lists or your favorite shows**

If community engagement plays a big part at your organization, there are still ways that your employees can make a difference while staying safe:

- **Organize a fundraiser for a local food pantry or at-risk community center**
- **Share positive stories of people supporting each other in your community**

You can take small steps to support your staff during COVID-19 by helping employees stay connected to one another and to their organization while working remotely.



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Ergonomics at Home



Many of us are dealing with a new workspace, our homes. While we might not have everything we would have at work, there are steps we can take to protect our bodies from ergonomic issues like neck, back or wrist pain.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Your workspace might be a kitchen table or desk, so use a little creativity. Here are some ideals to strive for when creating a computer workstation:

- Assume a relaxed, tension-free posture in your neck and shoulders
- Place your elbows at a 90° angle
- Keep your wrists protected from sharp or hard edges, and in a neutral position
- Make sure the mouse is at the same height and distance from the screen as the keyboard
- Ensure adequate lower back support
- Keep your knees at a 90° angle
- Keep your hips at a 90° angle
- Position your feet flat on the floor or supported by a footrest
- Make sure the height of your work surface is appropriate
- Sit at the correct distance from the monitor: about 25"
- Keep computer monitor at, or slightly below, eye level

See what you have around your home to help you achieve this. Possibly prop your monitor up on some boxes to get it to the right height, or use boxes or tubs as a footrest, if needed. Perhaps place a towel under your wrists to protect from sharp edges.

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR EYES

Working from home, you will likely have many hours behind a computer screen. Just as your body needs rest, so do your eyes. The Mayo Clinic recommends the following tips to help prevent eyestrain:

- Remember to blink – it will create tears to moisten your eyes and can keep them fresh
- Look away from your screen often – follow the “20-20-20 rule”: Every 20 minutes, look at something about 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds
- Make sure you have good lighting and avoid glares on your screen – perhaps position a desk lamp nearby and avoid putting screens directly in front of a window or white wall
- Adjust the font size on your computer to make it easy to read



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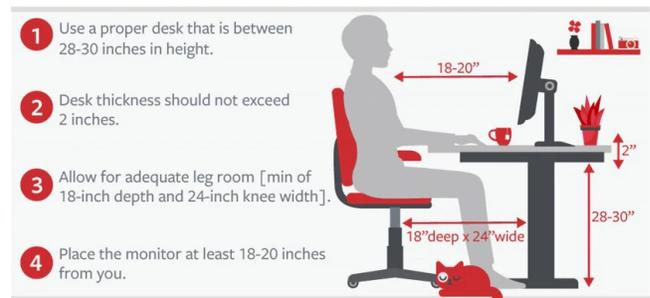
CREATE A REGULAR SCHEDULE

While what is “regular” might be different depending on your situation – for example if you have kids at home with you – but keeping to a routine will be helpful. When the lines between work and home are blurred, you might have a tendency to work longer hours. Here are some tips to give your body the rest it needs:

- Remember to eat regular meals and drink lots of water – it’s a good way to keep your body and brain fueled, and a chance to step away from work for a bit
- Stretch your arms, legs, neck and back on a regular basis – you might want to create “meetings” that pop up in your email to remind you to stretch
- Get up and go for a walk – whether it’s walking around home or a quick walk outside, keeping your body moving can help with blood flow and prevent strain
- Create a stopping point for your day – do the work you can in the schedule you create, but set an endpoint so you can get good sleep and some downtime for your next day

If you find you are experiencing pain while working, report it to your supervisor right away. Pain should never be part of the job. Asking others for help can provide solutions you may not have thought of. Consider taking a photo of yourself in your workstation and sending it to your safety contact for review. They can likely provide alternative ideas and perhaps specific stretches to help with your issues. We are all in this together, so use all the resources you have available to keep your body healthy.

4 Tips for Setting Up Your Home Office Desk



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Managing Stress During a Time of Crisis



A crisis can occur at any time, whether it's the result of a personal problem, a workplace incident or a larger societal issue like the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting stress from a crisis can put serious strain on workers, but certain steps can help manage this anxiety.

FACE THE CAUSE OF YOUR STRESS

The first step in managing stress is facing it. In stressful situations, it can be tempting to ignore the cause of our anxiety and focus on something else, but this only compounds the problem. Stress rarely goes away on its own, but focusing on the real cause of our anxiety gives us a chance to address it.

A crisis might have you taking on new tasks, looking after others or adding multiple responsibilities onto your already-full plate. This might be on top of health concerns you are dealing with, or worries about a family member or co-worker. To address the situation and keep yourself from feeling overwhelmed, focus on the smaller issues that you can control and build from there.

REACH OUT FOR ASSISTANCE

When managing your stress, take advantage of available resources whenever possible. At work, talk to your supervisor about managing additional job responsibilities or a human resources representative for more sensitive issues. Your workplace might offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with access to financial planners, counselors and other resources. Reach out to learn more about what is available to you and how to access these tools.

Outside of work, talk to a doctor, your loved ones or friends for additional support and guidance. No one needs to conquer a crisis alone; lean on others when you need help and provide assistance when others need it from you.

BE PROACTIVE

Ultimately, managing your stress during a crisis may require action, but the right steps will depend on your situation. If a crisis has you working from home and looking after your kids while trying to get your normal job done, talk to your supervisor about your options. Maybe you can work different hours or plan for certain breaks when you can focus on your kids, but you first have to identify the issue and talk it through.

If you are concerned about going into work or handling new job responsibilities during a crisis, voice these concerns to learn more about what precautions your organization is taking. If you are handling safety-sensitive tasks or learning new responsibilities, take your time and ensure you have the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The middle of a crisis is not the time for shortcuts, so follow the proper steps for every job and encourage your co-workers to do the same.

STAY HEALTHY

When dealing with stress, our physical and mental health can sometimes fall to the wayside. Focus on keeping your body and mind healthy to help manage your stress during a crisis.

- Get at least seven hours of sleep each night
- Get some form of regular exercise, even if it's just taking walks before or after work
- Take regular breaks, including when working remotely
- Eat healthy meals
- Make time for activities you enjoy
- Avoid focusing on work once you are finished for the day
- Practice strong personal hygiene and take time off when sick
- Follow the recommendations of local health authorities

No crisis or stressful situation is the same, but these steps can help ease anxieties in difficult times. Be sure to care properly for yourself so you can ensure the safety of those around you.



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Work-From-Home Best Practices in the Midst of COVID-19



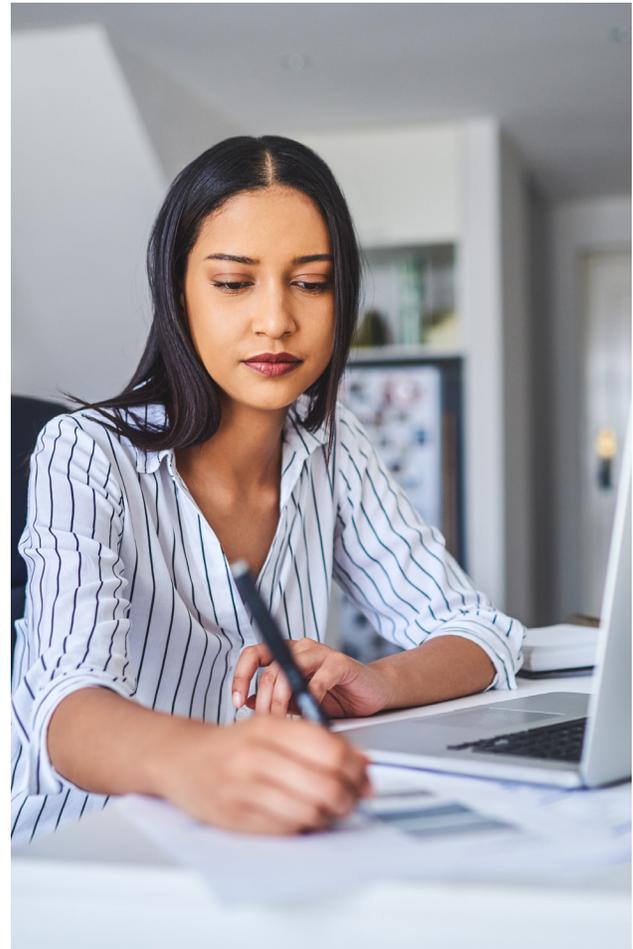
As countries across the globe grapple with COVID-19, many people in the U.S. are dealing with a new reality – telecommuting. Working from home may be completely new for some, while others may have some experience occasionally working remotely, such as during inclement weather. No matter your history, working from home may be the new norm for many employees.

MAKE YOUR SPACE WORK FOR YOU

Identifying the best place to work from home can go a long way toward being productive. Find an area that is quiet, free from interruptions and has good lighting. Make sure your work area has temperature controls and is free of tripping hazards. You will also want to make sure you are set up well ergonomically, which means designing a safe and efficient job environment to work in, wherever that environment might be. For example, your chair, monitor and keyboard should be arranged so that you can keep your body in a neutral position. Make sure you are not sitting or standing for prolonged periods of time. Relieve stress on your body by taking frequent breaks, varying your tasks and stretching regularly. And, just as with onsite work, you should follow your organization's procedures for safe lifting and personal protective equipment, as well as outlined precautions for electricity and hazardous materials.

CONNECT WITH COLLEAGUES

Working from home means less in-person interaction with your colleagues, but it does not mean you can't connect with them in other ways. Scheduling video chats or meetings is a fantastic way to keep interaction with your coworkers going. If you don't have video capabilities, regular phone calls can also help keep you connected. In addition, you can plan or participate in fun activities with your remote colleagues, such as virtual coffee breaks, group walking challenges or sharing photos of your unique home work spaces. While it is important to avoid distractions during your work day, taking time to interact with fellow employees can help you avoid feelings of isolation and make your day feel more "normal."



BE PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

Employees working from home should make sure they are prepared if an emergency arises. They should have easy access to first aid supplies. They should also have an emergency preparedness plan in place specific to their home. The plan should include what alert mechanisms are available to them, such as fire alarms and weather radios. It should also include the locations of the closest hospitals and shelters. Keeping clean water, food and generators on hand is also recommended.



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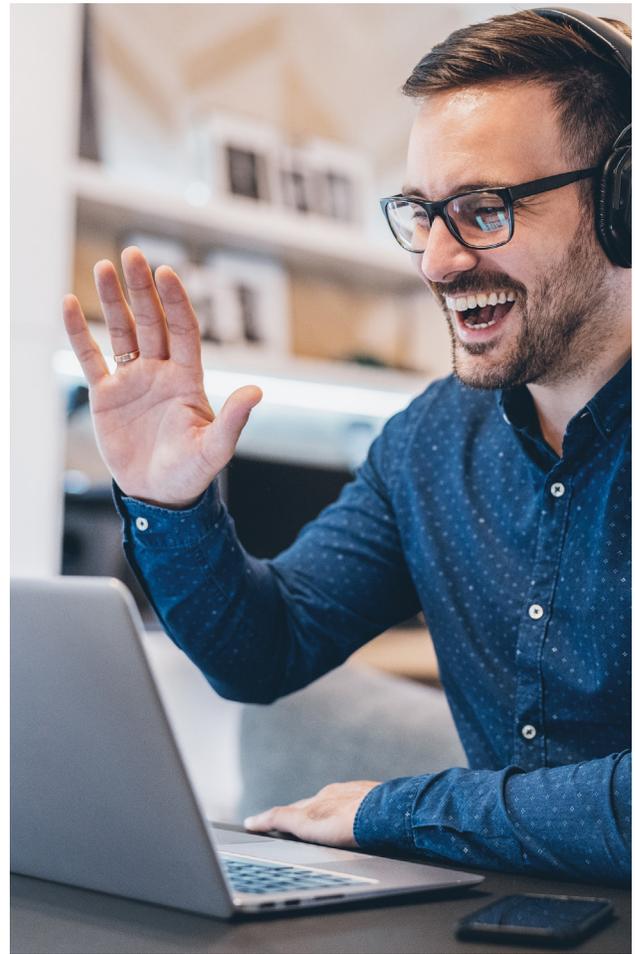
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SECURE NEEDED EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS

A crucial element to ensure work-from-home success is making sure you have the equipment and tools you need to do your job. This includes laptops, monitors, keyboards and other computer-related devices. A strong internet connection is also recommended. Remote workers will want to consider having their work phone forwarded to their cell or house phone. In addition, utilizing video conferencing tools is a great way to make sure important meetings are not missed, and embracing instant messaging tools can help with short, quick communications between you and your colleagues. Employees will also need to evaluate whether they need network access, passcodes and instructions for remote login.

UNDERSTAND EXPECTATIONS

Working from home may mean a shift in how you work and interact with your coworkers and supervisor. Connect with your manager to understand remote work policy and expectations. Is working your normal schedule required? Are you able to adjust your hours based on needs at home? Does your employer expect you to be on call 24-7? Getting answers to these questions up front will help alleviate issues and uncertainty down the road.



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