Design Safety Solutions

'Working with you to *Design Safety Solutions*'

Sean Bourke

0404 829 585

Sean.Bourke@designsafetysolutions.com.au

Working from home - Tips

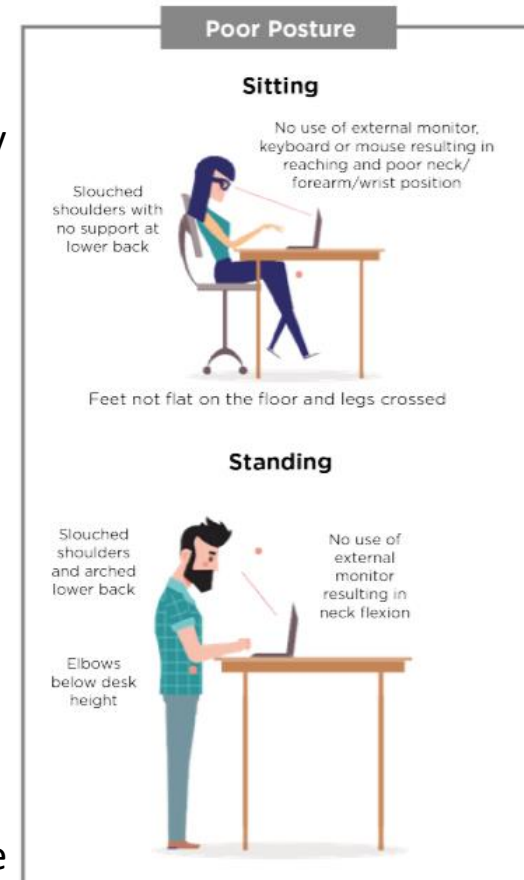**12 June 2020**

Telecommuting = Working from Home

The Workplace is evolving in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COVID-19 is rapidly changing the way we live and work every day with **telecommuting** (working from home), becoming the new reality for many of us.

Home based offices are considered a workplace under work health and safety laws so it's important for workers and employers to work together to identify and minimise work health and safety risks at home. Have a look at SafeWork Australia's working from home information, which includes employer, small business and worker topics.

For specific guidance - Working from home - Workstation Setup Guide - COVID-19 (SafeWork Australia), which includes a checklist. The guidance is similar however, different States and Territories may have additional items included.

The two (2) main considerations are ergonomic and electrical (inspect the cord for any damage – if damaged do not use it – replace it). The Telecommuting checklist (WorkSafe Qld) is a good start to assess you home workspace.

Poor Posture

Sitting

No use of external monitor, keyboard or mouse resulting in reaching and poor neck/forearm/wrist position

Slouched shoulders with no support at lower back

Feet not flat on the floor and legs crossed

Standing

Slouched shoulders and arched lower back

No use of external monitor resulting in neck flexion

Elbows below desk height

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Ergonomics

Health and safety issues to consider when setting up a home office, include:
* whether working from a different location will introduce additional risks, such as risks associated with hazardous manual handling,
* the suitability of work activities,
* the suitability of the workstation set up,
* the environment, for example lighting and noise,
* communication requirements,
* mental and emotional wellbeing, and
* any training in safe working procedures that may be required.

This Ergonomic guide to computer-based workstations (WorkSafe Qld) is a good resource. Additional resources are at Learning the art of office ergonomic (WorkSafeQld).
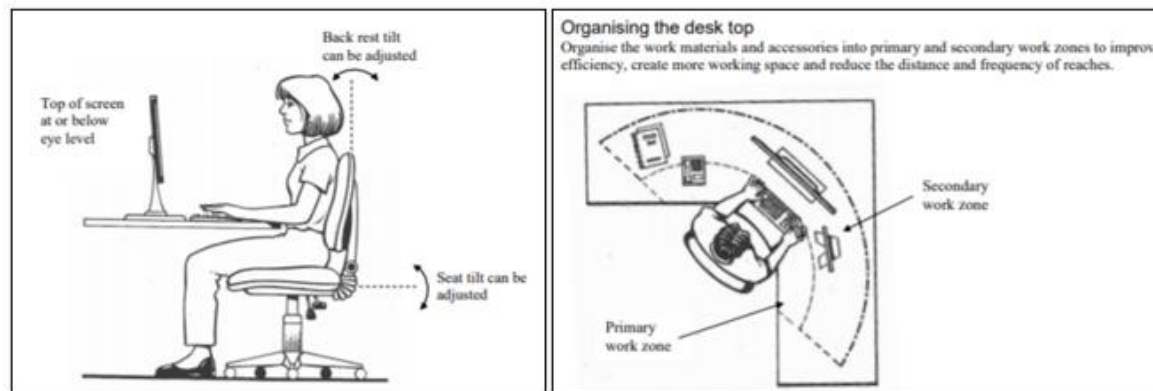
Breaks and Stretches

Remember - to take breaks and have a stretch.

Whether you work indoors or outdoors, remaining still for too long can lead to pain and injury.

Stretching is a good way to improve your flexibility and muscle soreness. Concentrate on slow, sustained stretches and hold each stretch for 10 to 20 seconds.

Resource 4. Here are six simple stretches (SafeWork NSW).
- Neck rotation
- Shoulder rotations
- Side bends
- Wrist and forearm exercises
- Backwards arching
- Heel raises

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Electrical equipment – check it!

You must consider the following to ensure your safety at home when using electrical equipment:

- Check to see if you have a safety switch installed and that it is operational by pressing the test button before you initially start work from home and every three months thereafter,
    - Check out how to see if you have a safety switch [Safety switches (Qld Electrical Safety Office)](#) (good video clip).
- Carry out a visual inspection of all electrical equipment in your home office.
    - Check for cuts, nicks or exposed conductors on any cords.
    - Check equipment for visible damage (broken covers, overheating dis-colouration).
    - Either discard any damaged equipment or have it repaired by an appropriately licensed electrical worker. Do not attempt to repair faulty equipment yourself.
- Ensure leads and power boards are placed where they will not get damaged by moving furniture, chairs, foot traffic or other activities.
- To avoid overheating and fire risks, don't place papers or other items against air vents of equipment or cover equipment such as power boards or power supplies.
- Don't cover or stack up equipment under charge (e.g. phones to laptops).
- Don't permit children to touch or play with electrical cords and make sure electrical cords are not dangling from benches or within your child's reach.
- Ensure power boards and outlets are not overloaded (e.g. don't plug in several room heaters into one power board) and are not placed where they may be splashed with liquids.

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Telecommuting = Working from Home

Working from home is still working!

What reasonable steps are being taken to ensure it is safe?

It is an employers responsibility to Identify, Assess and Control hazards.

Given the COVID-19 Pandemic is a known hazard and working from home is reducing exposure of our teammates to each other and their extended networks; the requirement to provide a safe workplace remains.

Employers are required to control hazards as is reasonably practicable. Identify your workgroups, can you keep them separated, business continuity.

There is quite a lot of information available on the internet but as you would appreciate a lot of the businesses do not have dedicated people to source and put the information in a form that can be easily communicated in the business.

How do I set up a workstation at home?

Looking after the mental health of workers at home

If you or anyone you know needs help:
Lifeline on 13 11 14
Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800
MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978
Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467
Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636
Headspace on 1800 650 890
ReachOut at au.reachout.com
Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) on 1800 008 774

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Conclusion

COVID-19 is here and we need to manage how we work.

Should you have any questions just call or email me.

0404 829 585

Sean.Bourke@designsafetysolutions.com.au

http://linkedin.com/in/sean-bourke

Stay safe, look after your workmates.