

Montana Municipal
Interlocal Authority

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Workplace ergonomics is the science of designing the workplace to reduce injuries such as tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome. Ergonomic design promotes the use of neutral body postures to help avoid injuries. It's important to keep ergonomics in mind while teleworking. The tips below will help you in arranging your telework space and equipment to promote a safe and healthy working environment.

Neutral Body Postures

Before you begin designing the telework space and arranging your equipment, you need a basic understanding of neutral body postures. Neutral body postures include:

- Use joints in their mid-range of motion. Avoid reaching, twisting, bending, etc.
Tip: Person - keyboard/mouse - monitor should form a straight line.
- Sit upright in the chair with your back in contact with the backrest. Arms should hang naturally with your elbows at your side, not out in front of you.
Tip: Move closer to the keyboard and mouse.
- Forearms and wrists should be parallel to the floor (i.e. upper arm and forearm at a 90° angle at the elbow).
Tip: Wrists should not be bent back towards your body.
Tip: The keyboard and mouse should be at the same height and as close together as possible.
Tip: Use wrist rests.
- Thighs should be parallel to the floor (i.e. thighs and torso at a 90° angle at the hip).
Tip: Adjust the seat height.
Tip: You may need a footrest to allow contact between your feet and the floor.
- Head should look straight forward, not bent down or tilted up.
Tip: Eyes should be level with top 1/3 of screen.
Tip: Use items such as books, boxes, etc. to raise the monitor.
Tip: Monitor should be an arm's length away from you.
- Don't cradle the phone between the head and shoulder.
Tip: Use speaker phone or a headset.



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Microbreaks

Even if you use perfect neutral body postures, performing repetitive tasks or holding the same position for too long stresses muscles. Using microbreaks in addition to neutral body postures can help reduce the stress on your body and prevent injuries. Microbreaks are frequent, short breaks that allow change of positions, use of different muscle groups, and stimulate blood flow.

Tip: Take a microbreak every hour for 60 – 90 seconds.

Tip: Use large movements such as swinging your arms, shoulder rolls, shanking out your hands, marching in place, etc., and use smaller movements like wiggling your fingers. You may also include some light stretching.

Telework Space Design

- Choose a space that allows you to control the lighting for optimal viewing of the computer.
 - Tip:** If necessary, rearrange the space to adjust for the lighting, and to incorporate the use of an appropriate work surface.
- Choose a work surface with adequate space for the computer equipment and associated office supplies (i.e. notepads, reference materials, etc.).
 - Tip:** If necessary, remove household items from the work surface such as decorations, plants, photos, books, dishes, etc. to create the necessary space.
 - Tip:** You may need to move a work surface from another location to the telework space.
- Ensure the work surface is close to an electrical outlet to safely connect the equipment to the power source and minimize tripping hazards.
- Choose a chair that allows you to:
 - Sit close to the work surface to avoid reaching; and,
 - Sit at a height that allows for neutral posture while keying/mousing.

Using a Laptop or Tablet

Using a laptop or a tablet while teleworking can pose ergonomic challenges. The most common challenges and suggested solutions are listed below.

Challenges	Possible Solutions
1. The keyboard, mouse and monitor are connected. The equipment design doesn't allow for users to maintain a neutral posture of the head as they must look down at the monitor while keying and mousing. 2. Screen size makes it difficult to view documents.	1. a. Connect a separate keyboard and mouse to the device via the USB ports. b. Place device at a height where eyes are level with top 1/3 of screen. 2. Use the settings in the internet browser, email application and any other software applications to increase the font size for easier viewing.