The Coronavirus Pandemic has radically altered the way we live, work, learn and play. The impact of these changes almost immediately became evident socially and economically, and the ripple effects will continue to manifest in ways known and unknown. In an effort to mitigate the spread of the virus through social distancing and compliance with shelter-in-place requests or requirements, work-from-home arrangements have become the norm. Working from home presents a variety of challenges including physical, social and emotional. The following information is intended to help workers navigate these new challenges safely and efficiently.

HOME-BASED WORKER SAFETY TIPS[1]

Setting up and arranging a work space in a personal residence can introduce a variety of unexpected and unrecognized hazards. Principal among those is potential exposure to soft tissue injuries and musculoskeletal disorders as a result of improperly adjusted work stations, working from easy chairs or couches, and working in awkward, non-neutral postures. The following resources can help provide guidance and information to ensure a safer work-from-home arrangement:

- Risk Control Topics - Telecommuting/Home-Based Workers: Considerations and guidance for developing an on-going work-from-home policy and program.
- Home Based Office Safety Checklist: Editable template to help address fire, electrical, ergonomic, and general home office safety.
- Office Ergonomics – Workstation Adjustment Guidelines
- Adjustability for some work-from-home individuals may be limited based on work space, equipment and furniture (think kitchen table and dining room chair versus office cubicle and commercial office chair), making Stretching and Breaks extremely important.
- Guidance for Temporary Home Office ergonomic set-up from Briotix Health (*contact information is required to access this document*).

WEB-BASED OFFICE ERGONOMICS SOFTWARE SUPPORT

Vendor partner Briotix Health is an office ergonomics solutions provider that has offered no cost access to their online software platform during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The platform provides access to a Q&A style survey that returns suggestions for improving existing home-based workstation ergonomics, along with resource materials to help improve ergonomics and general well-being while working from home. Note: *Users will be required to register/provide their contact information in order to access these sites.*

Briotix Health: BxPro Virtual Office /Access

1. Go to: https://virtualoffice.briotix.works/

2. Create an account

3. Complete registration and account activation

4. Select Self-Assessment then the 360 Me icon
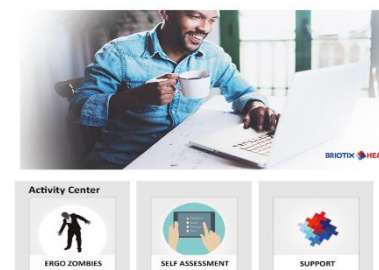
CYBER THREATS

The Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has issued an alert that warns of potential system vulnerabilities as more and more workers move to home-based office settings. The agency recommends the following mitigation measures:

- Maintain the latest security updates and patches on Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)
- Alert employees to an expected increase in phishing attempts. See CISA Tip Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Attacks
- Implement Multi-Factor Authentication on all VPN connections
- Ensure IT security personnel are prepared to ramp up remote cybersecurity tasks such as: log reviews, attack detection, and incident response and recovery
- Report incidents, phishing, malware, and other cybersecurity concerns to CISA

COMFORT, PRODUCTIVITY AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Beyond the physical differences of working from a temporary space in an extra bedroom, on the kitchen table, or on a couch, etc., working from home creates other less recognized challenges.   Humans crave social interaction and the isolation of working from home creates a barrier to these opportunities. Interruption in daily work routines can lead to feelings of anxiety and frustration. Working from home can produce feelings of separation or loneliness. ***Below are tips and considerations for maintaining mental health and a productive and positive state-of-mind.*[2]**

CONNECTEDNESS AND COMMUNICATION

- Increase the frequency of "live" contact through the use of online web conferencing and chat platforms such as: GoToMeeting, Zoom, WebEx, Skype, Slack, FaceTime
- Consider non-work video chat sessions to catch up with co-workers and share day to day experiences, frustrations, hopes, fears, etc.
- Grab a snack and beverage and set up a virtual social hour or a morning coffee meeting to maintain connection with co-workers
- Understand and accept that distractions and background noises are an unavoidable part of video-conferencing when working from home, but be self-aware and cognizant to minimize same
- Strike a balance between email, chat, and text. Exclusive use of these tools can lead to feelings of isolation.
- Pick up the phone – daily interaction will eliminate feeling lonely
- Understand work from home expectations from your manager and your team
- Loneliness and feelings of isolation are normal. If they begin to feel overwhelming contact your Human Resources professionals or utilize your company's Employee Assistance Program

WORKDAY ROUTINE & TIME MANAGEMENT

Establish a work routine including identifying "work time" and "non-work time" to the extent possible. Similar to how your daily commute allows you to decompress from the day at the office, set aside time at home to un-plug from work at the end of each workday. Consider these additional "routines":

- Maintain your usual weekday sleep schedule including getting up and going to bed at the same time
- Begin and end your workday at the same time as you normally would
- Create a to-do list for the day including time estimates for the tasks and use it to plan your day
- End your workday by starting a to-do list for the next day
- Put your physical work (files, documents, computer, notes, etc.) away when you are done working for the day
- Once work is done for the day, reset your mind and body with an activity such as: exercise, stretching, meditation, listening to music or a podcast, taking a walk, connecting with friends via phone or video-chat
- Strive to get a minimum of 8 hours of sleep every night

NUTRITION	BREAKS
- Maintain your eating and snacking schedule similar to the office - Keep unhealthy treats out of sight and easy reach - Avoid eating your lunch at your temporary work-area - Drink more water to suppress feelings of hunger and avoid excessive snacking - Eating healthy meals and snacks will help avoid feelings of fatigue and lack of energy	Improve focus on work by taking frequent (hourly) short breaks. These breaks will allow you to: - Rest and recover from physically repetitive tasks - Address unavoidable distractions from home-based work - Stretch and move body parts involved in sustained static postures - Go outside to get some fresh air and movement

[1]For the most up-to-date BTU Client Resource documents, see the BTU Client Resources page: https://www.berkley-tech.com/risk-control/#clientresources

[2]This information was culled from a variety of industry sources. BTU is not a provider of mental health resources and this information is not meant to be a substitute for professional mental health services

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