

## **DR. MORELLI's TIPS FOR TELEWORKERS & DISTANCE LEARNERS:**

### **Working at Home or Doing Schoolwork From Home Can Be Pain in Your Neck? Try These Posture and Ergonomic Tips:**

With so many people working from home or doing schooling at home these days to maintain social distancing from their colleagues and classmates, many are developing musculoskeletal pain. Improving posture and ergonomics is a proactive way to take care of your body while working remotely.

Working from home on a “make-shift” desk and/or an unsupportive chair is causing increased musculoskeletal pain soon after beginning work from home. One of the primary causes is working on a desktop, laptop, tablet or cell phone with poor posture or a poor ergonomic set-up.

The painful results of postural imbalance is one of the most common reasons patients seek help from Doctor of Chiropractic. Many of us slouch, text constantly, tip our head and hold our telephone to our ear, or cradle the phone with our shoulder, and sit at the computer or tablet all day with our shoulders and neck rounded forward with legs crossed...or even worse, lying face down propped up on our elbows, or sitting on a foot or with a leg under us!

#### **To reduce stress on the body, Dr. Morelli offers the following work/school-at-home suggestions:**

You might need a quiet room to work or specialized software or ZOOM calls that keeps you pinned to your desk. For everything else, identify a few places in your home where you can work, and change body position and location throughout the day. If at all possible, find ways to work standing, walking, and sitting.

- Sit in a good chair—even a wooden one—on your sit bones (the bones at the very bottom of your pelvis), with a little arch in your low back. (You can place a small pillow or rolled towel in the small of your low back). Avoid the slouch, that half-sitting, half-lying position so many use to lounge on the sofa or in bed. If working in bed or on the sofa, sit up on your sit bones, and have some back support.
- When sitting, put both feet on the floor with a right angle at your knees. Avoid crossing legs or tucking in feet. Good posture means the bones carry the weight of your body. Aligning your posture lets your bones do the work, not your muscles. This prevents muscle spasm, pain, and inflammation. It can even prevent nerve pain and headaches.
- Use a keyboard tray and pull it out over your lap. If you use a laptop, use it as a screen only, placing it at eye level with a stand or a stack of books. Get a remote keyboard and mouse to use with a keyboard tray or on the tabletop.
- To avoid neck pain, keep your screen at eye level whether you use a laptop or monitor. Put books underneath your monitor to raise it or use a stand, if necessary.
- Shoulders should be dropped and relaxed, with elbows hanging down, centered at the seam line of your shirt. Don't use the keyboard with your elbows reaching forward. This could cause isometric spasm in your neck and/or shoulders and arms, leading to pain and inflammation.
- Keep your sternum or breastbone lifted. This keeps your torso, head and shoulders erect. Letting the sternum collapse down will pull the head forward and compresses your torso.
- Avoid forward head position. Keep your head erect, in line with your torso. Keep your screen at eye level. For every inch, your head is forward it increases the weight on your upper back and neck by 10 pounds! If you use a cell phone, rest your elbows on your chest and hold the phone at eye level.
- Use a telephone headset or earbuds so you don't have to crunch your neck when using the phone.
- If using a tablet computer, get a stand for it or prop it up in front of you. Don't put it down flat on the table or desk, and hover over it with your head and hands! If possible, connect a keyboard so you do not have to constantly reach up to the touch screen.
- Remember to take several exercise breaks throughout the day, even if only to empty the dishwasher, put in a load of laundry, climb the stairs a few times, do yoga, get in some planks and squats, dance, walk the dog, or take a short walk.

Don't be surprised if you catch yourself with poor posture several times a day. As your habits change, you'll be able to spot poor posture right away and fix it. “If you catch yourself slumping,” “admit to it to yourself, and think, ‘I can fix this.’ And fix it. Done!”

**Don't hesitate to CALL us if you need to come in for a treatment! M-F: 9-Noon & 2-6 (808) 671-2685**