



EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

September 2024



DEER OAKS PRESENTS

Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

*How to Lead a Team that Provides Great
Customer Service*

Date: Monday, October 28, 2024

Time: 1:00 PM-2:00 PM CST

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EYE SAFETY AT WORK IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Maintaining healthy vision is important to avoiding injuries on the job. Make vision a health priority, because eye safety at work is everyone's business.

Preventing Work-Related Eye Injuries

Each day, about 2,000 U.S. workers receive medical treatment because of eye injuries sustained at work. Workplace injury is a leading cause of eye trauma, vision loss, disability, and blindness, and can interfere with your ability to perform your job and carry out normal activities.

Employers and workers need to be aware of the risks to sight, especially if they work in high-risk occupations. The combination of removing or minimizing eye safety hazards and wearing proper eye safety protection can prevent many eye injuries.

Personal protective eyewear such as safety glasses with side shields, goggles, face shields, and/or welding helmets can protect you from common hazards, including flying fragments, large chips, hot sparks, optical radiation, splashes from molten metals, objects, particles, and glare. The risk of eye injury and the need for preventive measures depend on your job and the conditions in your workplace.

Employers can take several precautions to make the work environment as safe as possible and help reduce the risk of visual impairment and blindness caused by injury:

- Conduct an eye-hazard assessment.
- Remove or reduce all eye hazards where possible.
- Provide appropriate eye protection for the types of hazards at the worksite.
- Require all employees in hazardous situations to wear the appropriate eye protection.



- Keep eye protection in good condition, and assist workers with attaining the proper fit.
- Keep bystanders out of work areas or behind protective barriers.
- Use caution flags to identify potential hazards, such as hanging or protruding objects.
- Provide emergency sterile eyewash solutions/stations near hazardous areas.
- Post first-aid instructions and information on how to get emergency aid.

Eye safety should receive continuing attention in workplace educational programs. Procedures for handling eye injuries should also be established and reinforced. Workers should have a comprehensive dilated eye examination on a regular basis (typically every two years) to help ensure good eye health.

OFFICE ERGONOMICS

Neck and shoulder pain, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome—how can working at a desk job make you feel like you handle a jackhammer for a living? The answer is ergonomics, the science of coordinating physical working conditions to workers. The word comes from the Greek word *ergon*, meaning work; and *nomos*, meaning laws.

These laws of work aim to make people fit into workplaces to improve health and productivity by making workspaces more comfortable. Many companies have ergonomic programs covering noise, air temperature and humidity, and even how employees sit in front of their computers. Proper ergonomics can ease job stress and prevent chronic injuries and disabilities, such as:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Excessive fatigue
- Eyestrain and irritation
- Blurred vision
- Headaches
- Stress
- Neck pain
- Back pain

If you're concerned about stress and strains on your body, pay attention to your posture. A good ergonomic setup will help you maintain proper posture while you work, while a bad setup will have you twisting and turning all over the place.

Make adjustments if you're uncomfortable. Don't let your office space dictate how you work. A well-designed workplace will boost your energy level, job satisfaction, and productivity.

Ergonomic Advice

Your body works best when you're in a relaxed, natural position. Try to limit activities that put you in awkward positions or make your muscles tense. Other things you can do include:

- Varying your tasks so you can alternate between standing and sitting
- Stretching and relaxing muscles and joints that have remained in the same position for long periods of time
- Remembering the 20/20 rule for tired eyes; look about 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes



Use the telephone properly.

If you have to talk on the phone often, use the speaker function or a headset. Resting the phone between your ear and shoulder can cause neck and shoulder problems.

Take brief breaks from repetitive tasks.

Even in the most thoroughly ergonomic workstations, people who sit for long periods of time should change their positions at least once every hour. Try shifting your weight from side to side, standing up and walking around for a minute, or doing some stretching exercises.

Specific Recommendations

Posture

A common posture problem for people who work with computers is holding their heads in front of their shoulders and arching their necks, like turtles peering out of their shells. Slouched backs and rounded shoulders often accompany this poor posture. Working in this position can lead to frequent headaches, backaches, and sore necks. Fatigue that can't be relieved by rest breaks is another symptom.

If you experience these types of problems, you should ask a colleague to take a look at your workstation posture and describe it to you. See if you fit into any of the poor posture categories. If so, evaluate your workstation for any changes you can make.

Chairs

- Chair height should be at a level so your feet rest flat on the floor and your thighs are almost parallel to the floor. If your feet can't be flat on the floor, use a footrest.
- The front edge of the seat cushion should curve down slightly, allowing a two- to three-inch space from the backs of your knees. Ideally, the seat cushion should be able to slide forward, allowing you to recline slightly.
- The backrest should follow the natural curves of your spine to offer lumbar support. It should also recline. Leaning too far forward can put too much pressure on the back.
- Armrests should be padded and adjust vertically and horizontally. Armrests should be high enough to support your forearms comfortably, but not cause your shoulders to hunch up.
- The chair should have five legs for stability and be able to swivel and roll.
- A chair with a seat that can slide forward as you lean back, or with a reclined backrest with lumbar support, is the best model to prevent back pain.

Keyboards

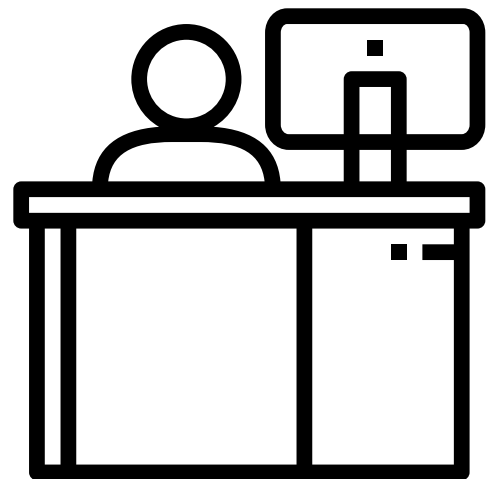
Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common ailment suffered by office workers. It's caused by repetitive hand or wrist activity. Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on one of the nerves that leads to the hand. One symptom is a tingling or pins and needles feeling in the fingers, especially at night or during activities that involve bending the fingers. Other symptoms include a burning sensation or hand weakness. Contact your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms. To avoid carpal tunnel syndrome, take the following precautions:

- Place your keyboard directly in front of your chair so your arms hang naturally and your wrists remain in a neutral position.
- Your adjustable keyboard support should have a space for your mouse that prevents overreaching.
- The keyboard support design should allow for your wrists, thumbs, and fingers to remain in a relaxed, neutral position.
- There should be plenty of room for your knees when you use the keyboard support.

Computer Screens

- Place the screen directly in front of your chair and keyboard.
- The top of the screen should be at eye level or one to two inches below eye level.
- Generally, the screen should be 18 to 30 inches from your eyes. However, you may find it more comfortable to place your monitor as far away as possible, as long as you can still see the screen clearly.
- Your work area should have indirect, overhead lighting.
- The screen should be placed to minimize glare or reflections.
- The screen should be clean.
- Contrast and brightness should be adjusted so figures are easy to see. Avoid working on the computer with your major light source in front of you. If you wear bifocals, the monitor should be angled so that you don't have to tilt your head to see the screen.

If you sit for long periods of time, get up and walk around for a minute, or do some stretching exercises. These stretches are quick and easy to do at work, and you should do them several times a day.



Wrist Stretch

This stretch can help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome.

1. Press the backs of your hands together gently.
2. Keep your elbows pointing outward.
3. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat.

Neck Stretch

1. Tilt your head to one side.
2. Grasp your head with your arm from the same side and gently pull.
3. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, and repeat three to five times.

Shoulder Stretch

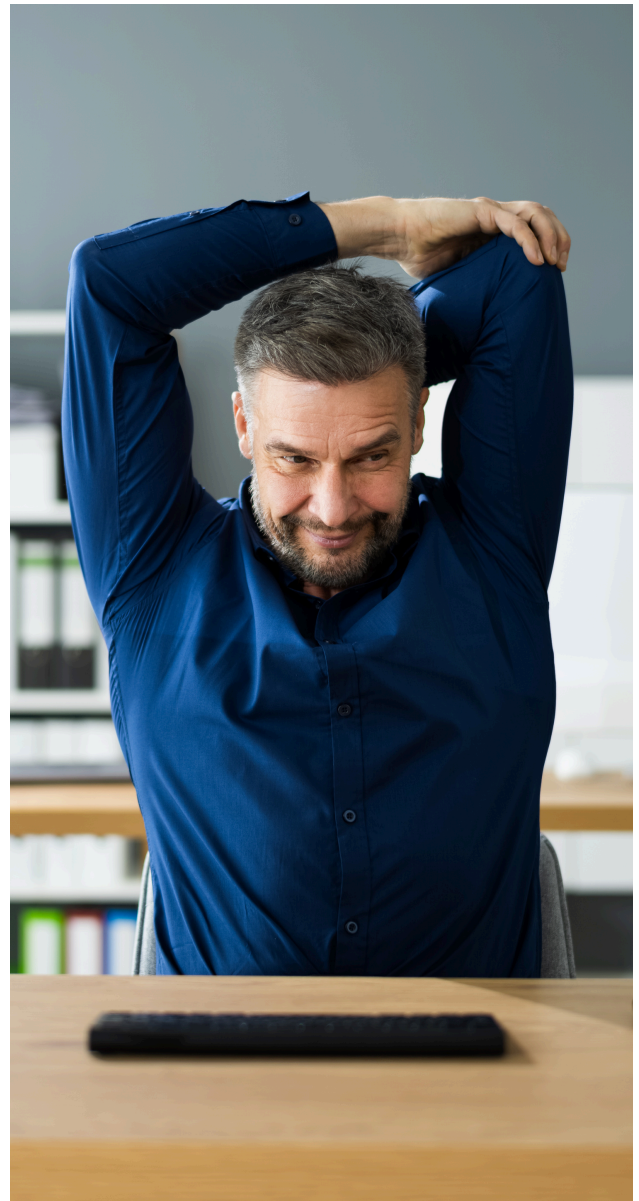
1. Relax your arms by your sides.
2. Roll your shoulders up, back, down, and forward.
3. Emphasize the stretch on the back and down portions.
4. Reverse direction.

Back Stretch

1. Stand up and place one hand on each hip.
2. Bend backward gently until your lower back begins to arch.
3. Hold for several seconds.

Sitting Hamstring Stretch

1. Sit on the floor or on a chair with one leg propped up.
2. Keeping your back straight, lean forward toward the extended leg until you feel a stretch.
3. For a more intense stretch, pull your foot back toward your forehead as you lean forward.
4. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, and repeat three to five times.



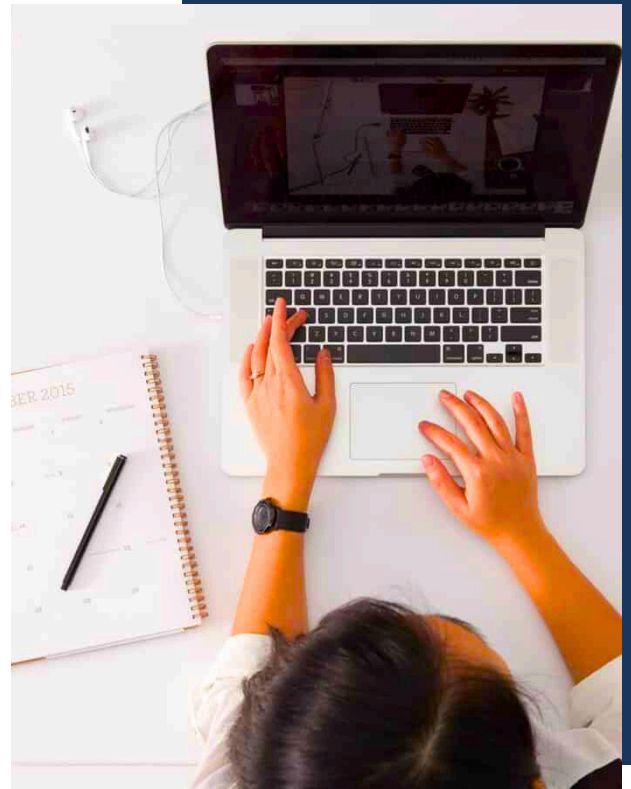
ASK YOUR EAP!

Q. Why is it necessary for the employee assistance program (EAP) to obtain a release and confirm the employee's participation after a supervisor referral? I am focused on performance changes, regardless of the employee's personal experience with the EAP.

A. A release of information advising you of the employee's attendance and cooperation with EAP recommendations is not necessarily needed unless participation was part of an agreement accepted by the employee, based on performance issues, to participate in lieu of a management action. However, in any case, such limited communication is highly beneficial to the employee. A release increases the likelihood that the employee will follow through with the EAP's recommendations. This is not only because the issue may involve resistance and denial, but also due to human nature: a situation tends to lose urgency once a crisis has passed. The release helps maintain this sense of urgency. Even if you are not personally interested in limited information, this step will enhance the chances of achieving the desired performance changes.

Q. I find dealing with inconsistent work and performance to be time-consuming and difficult. Often, employees seem surprised when I raise issues with them. What can supervisors do to speed up the process of correcting performance?

A. Employee clients often state in EAP assessments that the supervisor hasn't made sufficiently known what is expected of them. Many don't have a job description, and years pass without annual reviews for some. So, employees are surprised when their performance is corrected. Ensure that you communicate with the worker about the job roles, responsibilities, and standards. Check in and give feedback often at first, and regularly afterward. Examine with your employees each of their job functions and the standards set. Using this process, you are almost guaranteed to have no surprised employees when performance is corrected. Let employees know what "outstanding" looks like, and likewise with gradations like "above average," "average," "satisfactory," and below. Use performance improvement plans to maximize clarity, and then rely on your HR or management advisor for guidance regarding how to implement them. Tip: Encourage a workplace culture where accountability is valued and expected. If you do this, employees will naturally take ownership of their performance, reducing the need for constant oversight.



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