

COVID-19

HEALTH & SAFETY CONCERNS FOR REMOTE EMPLOYEES

2020

Health & Safety Concerns for Employees That Are Suddenly Working Remote

I spent two years in my career working from home. My office was an unfinished basement at first, and in the last year I moved it to the garage so I could open the door and have a panoramic view of the driveway.

I learned early that I needed to have a routine to be effective. I needed to shower, move from my bed to an actual work environment, get dressed as if I were going to the office (like the weatherman and not the anchor of the late-night news – pants required).

It wasn't easy by any stretch, the fantasy of trading in the commute for a workout at lunch or being able to make "good coffee" as opposed to the dregs of the shared office carafe, never actually came to fruition. Reality was more like frequent 12-hour days that ended with my wife opening the garage door and saying dinner had been ready for a couple of hours and she was tired of hearing "five more minutes." Reality was more like colleagues starting every meeting with "how was Oprah today?" Reality was my neighbors giving me strange cock-eyed looks while they walked their dog past the neighborhood weirdo in a shirt and tie with three monitors and a desk in his garage talking to walls. I'll admit that sometimes I did talk out loud when I wasn't in a video conference.

The technology wasn't as good as it is now. I had connectivity issues. Video would buffer or freeze every time I had the funniest look on my face. I was never more than 30 feet from my family, but I rarely saw them.

I'm not complaining or looking for sympathy. I made the choice to work remote. It allowed me to take my son to and from school, and it was a necessity for those two years.

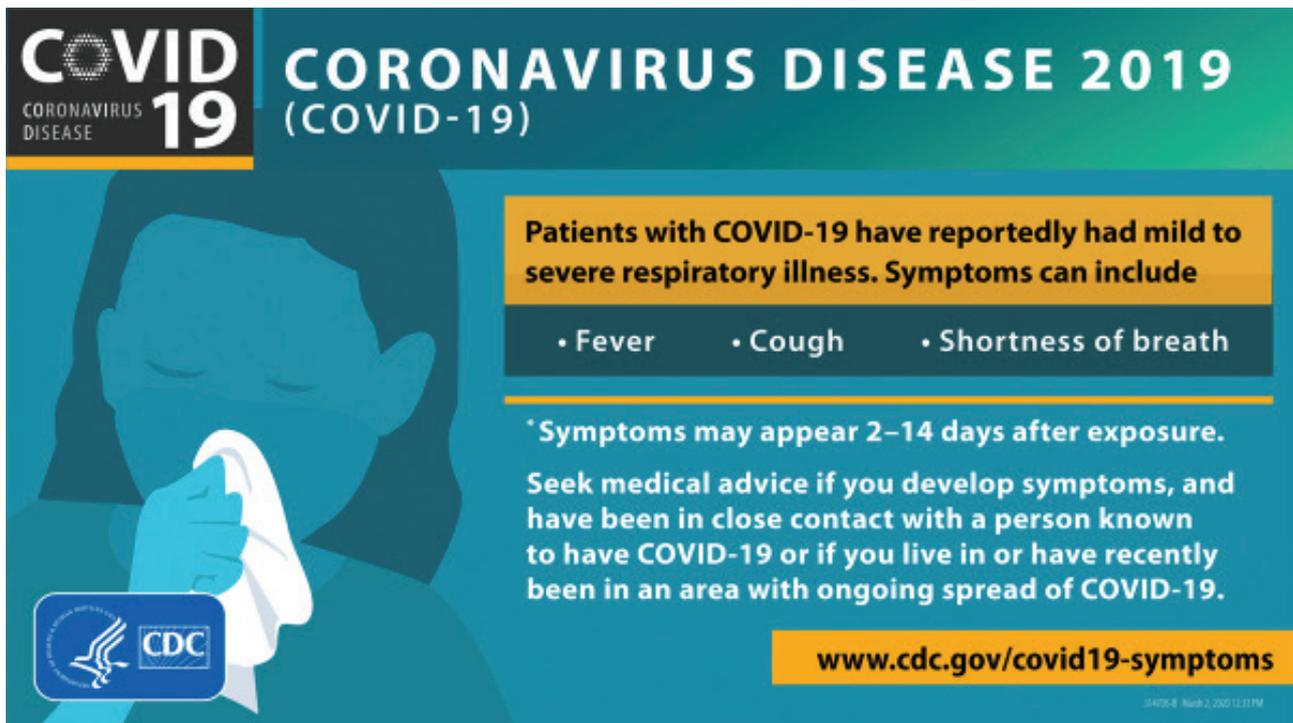
I was hyper-productive, probably because I felt an internal guilt and unmentioned pressure to over-perform because the first thought everybody had was that I was on a work-vacation.

It was a unique experience, and in my career I have sat with friends and colleagues at conferences and workshops who had also experimented with a long-term remote work schedule and we would trade war stories about what worked and didn't, disasters avoided, and some that were shared over video conference that exposed an intimacy to board meetings you wish could be taken back.

Now we are in a place where a large segment of the world is forced to experience the same ups and downs I had.

Of course, it is very different, nobody is actively choosing this Pandemic work schedule. If you are lucky enough to be working and not having an interruption in your financial well-being, the added stress of the omni-present COVID-19 nightmare is far more reaching than anything I had to experience. But we have a new shared experience, the community of remote workers is much bigger. As an employee and employer, it is a strange and unprecedented time.

We have been in the safety training, compliance,



COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Patients with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms can include

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

* Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure.
Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

www.cdc.gov/covid19-symptoms

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and awareness business since 1929 and I can speak from experience, in saying that remote work, especially this sudden remote work, and especially while in the midst of a public-health crisis, poses some serious OHS concerns for employees and employers – far beyond what I experienced in my garage for two years.

STATE OF THE UNION

As of my writing this article, both the US and Canada are experiencing the highest rates of unemployment, and the fastest growth in unemployment ever recorded. These trends are global. Some essential businesses are running at 2-300% capacity, while other industries are shuttered.

- According to Labour Statistics, only 29% of workers can work from home, mostly in the Service and Information industries. Manufacturing can't be done from home. We are seeing how hard a sudden shift to education from home can be.
- 78% of North Americans have access to broadband internet, so even if technology seemed ubiquitous, it really isn't.

- According to Gallup, only 43% of organizations had, prior to COVID-19, some form of remote work available to employees. Just over 30% had some type of formal policy and procedures in place.

Although we had a toe in the water, the economy was in no way prepared for a dramatic shift to an entirely remote work environment.

But here we are... so what do organizations have to consider when it comes to OHS and remote employees, especially in the shadow of this health crisis?

COMPUTER/INTERNET SECURITY

For modern tech companies, the policies and infrastructure for remote work was most likely already in place, and the vast majority of employees were already laptop users. In fact, tech giants like Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Google and others transitioned to a 100% remote work environment with a weekend email.

For smaller organizations, the situation is very different, as remote work is mainly just email and other non-operational systems.

Currently, if you didn't have a strong and secure IT policy/procedure in place (and even if you did), your employees are exposing company devices and information to greater risk due to unsecure networks. Home environments have vulnerabilities your IT staff have removed from your organization's networks.

So, what should you be doing? I'd recommend having employees audit their home networks through a process built by your IT department or consultant. It may mean using a VPN, having security protocols for the use of USB storage and external devices on company laptops, endpoint security protocols such as firewalls and anti-malware, and limiting the ability to download and copy sensitive company data.

Your remote employees may be using Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other collaborative tools, but many of these tools are not as secure as you hope. It isn't difficult to remotely turn on cameras, zoomboom a meeting, or phish for data via collaboration tools.

Lastly, cybersecurity awareness training should be an annual requirement to say the least, but an immediate refresher is probably in order.

ERGONOMICS

It is estimated that musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) have an economic burden in excess of \$150 billion in North America each year. It is a top-5 OHS hazard across every industry.

In the past 3 weeks, the internet memes have been on fire with COVID offices. Employees have converted ironing boards to stand-up desks. They are taking zoom meetings from bathrooms because it is the only room in the house with a lock to keep the kids out.

I laugh at the pictures like everybody else, but the ergonomic impact on your employees is real and it

isn't funny.

According to the General Duty clause, you have an OHS responsibility, even for remote employees, to ensure they are working in a safe environment – free of risks and hazards. An employee taking a meeting while sitting on a toilet hunched over the laptop is not ergonomically sound, and the health and MSD risks are obvious.

The COVID surge might not have afforded the time to set up remote offices. It might be logistically impossible, if not financially unavailable, to order or purchase the right office equipment online to set-up your employees for ergonomic success; but there are general seating and posture rules that can be applied and enforced even if your work is being done at the dining room table.

Educate your employees of the importance of ergonomics, how to modify the principles for remote work, and check in on it before you are stuck with eventual worker compensation claims that will add more pain to this already difficult time.

MENTAL WELLNESS

Human beings are social creatures. A lot of talk in OHS and the media has been about the isolation, loneliness, and effects on overall mental health that have directly resulted from the social distancing and isolation guidelines associated with COVID-19.

In fact, we held a webinar with some mental health professionals on this very topic.

The increase in stress and decrease in physical health are common in remote work, and only exasperated by the added stress and anxiety with the public health scare. Your employees are scared for their families, their relationships, their financial security.

Workplace stress is also always a leading OHS concern across industries. I read an article recently that talked about a case study with Ctrip, a Chinese

COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

You can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses with these actions:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose & mouth.
- Wash hands often with soap & water for at least 20 seconds.

www.cdc.gov/COVID19

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travel agency that randomly assigned a small call-center staff to start working remotely. In the short term, the company reduced costs, improved retention rates, and employees reported being happier. But two weeks later, the tune changed, and sick-time increased, retention rates dropped, and overall employees complained of a feeling of loneliness and being disenfranchised with the company. Productivity plummeted because there was a break in the social bonds necessary for productive teamwork.

So, what can you do right now?

- 1. Overcommunicate** – utilize technology to bridge the isolation gap by having more than just meetings. We've implemented a weekly lunch, where we just get together via video conference and eat together, play games, talk about binge-watching. It's helped. No matter what, formalize a procedure and person to check in on remote employees at predetermined intervals.
- 2. Document communication policies** – online communication is a minefield. Texts

do not communicate sarcasm or jokes.

What may be innocuous in person can be perceived as harassment online. Sometimes the lines are clear, but sometimes they're fuzzy. If you add external stressors like a public-health scare, unguided online communication can be disastrous.

- 3. Make mental well-being a priority.** Maybe you can't organize walks, but your health provider/partner has evolved, and a lot of online and remote tools exist to improve mental health. Maybe purchasing a group/team license for apps like CALM is the right kind of OHS purchase at this time and for the long term.

OVERALL OHS

I've already said it, but you have a duty to protect your employees, regardless of where they work.

You should be taking extra care to ensure that your newly remote employees are aware of their OHS rights and are following safe work behaviours.

Do you have updated emergency contact information? Do your remote employees know

how to report workplace injuries when they are remote? Has your safety committee discussed or reinforced training about worker's rights, such as their right to refuse unsafe work? Are they exercising good workplace hygiene? Are they ensuring the cleanliness of themselves and the work environment?

I made a joke earlier about working in the bathroom, but the increased risk of a slip or fall in a wet bathroom is real, and it is still work if they are in a meeting in that bathroom, and their potential injury is still your responsibility.

If you were fortunate enough to be one of the few companies that had a remote working policy in place and a pandemic preparedness procedure, consider yourself lucky. But even if you did, you couldn't have imagined what is our current daily reality.

What do your employees need to know regarding overall OHS while they are working remote due to COVID-19?

1. What steps your workplace has in place for the pandemic. What is the continuity plan? What is their role?
2. What training should they be doing. You might have employees doing the work for others, do they have the training required? Can they do that work safely?
3. Do they have a remote work emergency/ OHS plan/kit? What are their new risks and hazards? How do they mitigate those risks? What do they do in an emergency?
4. What are their rights? What work can they refuse?
5. Wash their hands, exercise social distancing, know that they are part of a community that will get through this.

A pandemic is not a good litmus test for remote work and OHS strategies, but I know that businesses can persevere, and that tools and resources are there to help. It might be too hard to look out too far into the future right now, but with some diligence and thought, remote working can work, and work very well.

Model Short-Term Telecommuting Agreement

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Name:

Hire date:

Job title:

Department:

This temporary telecommuting agreement will begin and end on the following dates:

Start date:

End date:

Temporary work location:

Employee schedule:

The employee agrees to the following conditions:

- The employee will remain accessible and productive during scheduled work hours.
- Nonexempt employees will record all hours worked and meal periods taken in accordance with regular timekeeping practices.
- Nonexempt employees will obtain supervisor approval prior to working unscheduled overtime hours.
- The employee will report to the employer's work location as necessary upon directive from his or her supervisor.
- The employee will communicate regularly with his or her supervisor and co-workers, which includes a weekly written report of activities.
- The employee will comply with all [Company name] rules, policies, practices and instructions that would apply if the employee

were working at the employer's work location.

- The employee will maintain satisfactory performance standards.
- The employee will make arrangements for regular dependent care and understands that telecommuting is not a substitute for dependent care. In pandemic circumstances, exceptions may be made for employees with caregiving responsibilities.
- The employee will maintain a safe and secure work environment at all times.
- The employee will allow the employer to have access to the telecommuting location for purposes of assessing safety and security, upon reasonable notice by the company.
- The employee will report work-related injuries to his or her manager as soon as practicable.

[Company name] will provide the following equipment:

{insert}

The employee will provide the following equipment:

- The employee agrees that [Company name] equipment will not be used by anyone other than the employee and only for business-related work. The employee will not make any changes to security or administrative settings on [Company name] equipment. The employee understands that all tools and resources provided by the company shall remain the property of the company at all times.

- The employee agrees to protect company tools and resources from theft or damage and to report theft or damage to his or her manager immediately.
- The employee agrees to comply with [Company name]'s policies and expectations regarding information security. The employee will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home offices.

[Company name] will reimburse employee for the following expenses:

- Employee will submit expense reports with attached receipts in accordance with [Company name]'s expense reimbursement policy.
- The employee understands that all terms and conditions of employment with the company remain unchanged, except those specifically addressed in this agreement.
- The employee understands that management retains the right to modify this agreement on a temporary or permanent basis for any reason at any time.
- The employee agrees to return company equipment and documents within five days of termination of employment.

EMPLOYEE, MANAGER & HR SIGN-OFF

Source: SHRM

Memo: Temporary Suspension of Nonessential Business Travel

Due to [Company Name]'s commitment to employee safety in light of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, effective immediately, all nonessential business travel will be suspended until further notice. [Company Name] will continue to monitor the situation and provide guidance as more information on the extent and severity of the outbreak becomes available.

TRAVEL CANCELLATION PROCEDURES

If nonessential business travel has already been booked, please work with [your manager/HR/our travel coordinator/etc.] to cancel properly to receive an airfare and hotel refund or credit if applicable. Set up phone or online conferencing with clients or other business units to replace the in-person meetings, if possible. Please make sure your manager knows the status of all meetings cancelled due to this temporary suspension.

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL

Essential business travel should be limited to those situations where business cannot reasonably be conducted without face-to-face interaction or visits to specific locations. Your manager must approve all travel (including trips that were previously approved) until further notice.

PROCEDURES UPON RETURN FROM TRAVEL

Employees who become ill during or upon returning from travel with virus-like symptoms will need

to contact a health care provider as well as the HR department for direction as soon as possible.

[Optional, and not CDC recommended at this time due to overburdening doctors: Employees may not return to work without obtaining clearance from their health care provider.]

Employees returning from travel who do not exhibit virus-like symptoms must still contact the HR department upon return and may be directed to remain away from the workplace for fourteen days to determine whether or not they have been exposed. The returning employee should work with his or her manager to set appropriate telecommuting arrangements or request time off from work.

Please contact the human resources department with any questions or concerns.

Source: SHRM

Social Distancing to Avoid the Spread of COVID-19: What Should Your Business be Doing?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines social distancing as “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.”

Social distancing accepts or acknowledges that the coronavirus is likely widespread, community transmission is already occurring and the number of diagnosed cases is going to rise as more people receive testing. Social distancing, along with other risk reduction methods, attempts to slow the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the speed of new diagnoses, especially severe cases.

COVID-19, according to the CDC, is mainly spread from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Containment through border closings, transportation restrictions and quarantining sick or exposed individuals will be increasingly ineffective given the growing number of new cases attributed to community-acquired transmission. Nonetheless, the basics of preventing virus transmission remain the same:

- Frequent handwashing with soap and water (hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable)

- Don't touch your face (easier said than done!)
- Catch your cough or sneeze in the crook of your elbow
- Stay home from school or work if you are sick

COMMUNITY SOCIAL DISTANCING ACTIONS

The CDC also states, “The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community,” which is prompting the cancellation or reduction of events and opportunities for people to congregate together. Specifically, those social distancing actions include:

- Closing daycares, schools and college campuses
- Canceling concerts, parades and sporting events
- Canceling conferences or offering a virtual alternative
- Canceling church services
- Ordering employees to work from home
- Changing hours or available services at government buildings, like libraries

When people do need to be together in a workplace, school, church or public venue, experts recommend staying at least six feet apart, not exchanging handshakes or high fives, minimizing contact with any surfaces, as well as the standard precautions of

handwashing.

PUBLIC SAFETY SOCIAL DISTANCING ACTIONS

Public safety organizations – fire, EMS, law enforcement – in consultation with their medical director and local public health officials, recommend taking any or all of these actions to reduce opportunities for coronavirus transmission and increase social distancing:

- Restrict building access with locked doors or a secured indoor lobby. Designate most areas of the station for only currently on-duty personnel.
- Cancel station tours by youth and school groups.
- Postpone non-essential in-person continuing education of all types – lecture, hands-on and high-fidelity simulation.
- Deliver company training, roll call or shift briefing virtually with a conference call or web meeting.
- If a group of personnel must gather in a meeting room, ensure that chairs, tables and all training equipment are disinfected before and after the meeting.
- Require any face-to-face meeting attendees to spread out so they are at least six feet apart. Don't pass snacks, training materials or other items from person to person.
- Postpone non-essential station visits for equipment demonstrations or checks. Ask the vendor to provide demonstrations by live or recorded web video.

Many companies, including Facebook and Amazon, have canceled non-essential work travel.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON COVID-19 PLANNING

Ideally, every company has already begun to plan

for how COVID-19 will impact its personnel, their families and their willingness to report to work. At a minimum, planning should account for:

- Childcare needs if schools and daycares close.
- Regular or additional care personnel provide for elderly parents, especially if those elders are already institutionalized.

Maintaining maximum staffing during this pandemic is going to be an ongoing challenge that will require a combination of:

Personnel using PPE properly and appropriately.

- Updated or dynamic protocols for resource allocation.
- Supporting families of personnel throughout with preparatory information, prevention techniques, open communication channels and potentially food and housing. The workforce is more likely to report for duty if they are confident their family is OK.
- Transparent communication internally about department actions, needs and pandemic impacts.

Source: <https://www.ems1.com/coronavirus-covid-19/articles/social-distancing-to-control-covid-19-spread-action-items-for-public-safety-XsUtoUCb2JdKS0IP/>

SAFETY TALK

Get Moving: Why Health & Wellness Matters

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

To many of us live sedentary lives. We spend most of our waking hours at work sitting behind a desk, behind the wheel, or behind a counter. Then we plop down on the couch and relax in front of the TV when we get home. Even those of us who have more active jobs likely don't get enough exercise. A lack of physical activity is hazardous to your overall health and wellness.

Workers who are depressed often feel tired, unmotivated and have difficulty concentrating. Depression can cause problems with decision-making abilities and an increase in errors and accidents. Workers with depression also miss work more often and experience a higher level of presenteeism, where a worker is present at work but less focused and productive than workers without depression.

Due to the stigma of mental illness, many people find it hard to talk about their depression and seek help for it. Getting help is important, because if left untreated, depression can lead to job loss, damaged relationships, substance abuse and suicide.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Too little activity has been shown to increase the likelihood of:

- Cancer
- Heart attack and heart disease
- Stroke

- Diabetes and obesity

Without enough exercise you lose muscle mass, strength and flexibility, and bone loss progresses faster in people who aren't active. These factors can lead to falls, broken bones and mobility issues. Lack of regular exercise has also been linked to an increased risk of dementia, mood swings and depression.

Lastly, a sedentary existence can leave you with a weakened immune system and make you more susceptible to illnesses such as colds and the flu.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Get Moving!

- Research consistently shows that engaging in three days of physical activity per week, totaling 150 minutes or 50 minutes per session, produces health benefits.
- Brisk walking, running, bicycling, jumping rope, and swimming are all great examples of cardio exercises.
- Start with light or moderate aerobic exercise, for short periods of time (10 to 15 minutes) with sessions spread throughout the week to reduce your risk of injury and fatigue. Gradually build up to 50-minute sessions as your level of fitness improves.

Pump it up!

- Strength training, including lifting weights or resistance training, improves bone density

and helps slow bone loss as you age.

- Weight training strengthens connective tissue, muscles and tendons. This decreases your risk of falls, sprains and strains.
- Strength training also helps prevent loss of muscle mass.
- Remember to start slowly to reduce the risk of injury and give your muscles time to rest and recover. Wait at least 48 hours before you train the same muscle group again. Talk to your doctor before beginning a workout routine to make sure you are healthy enough for physical activity.

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SIX HABITS OF HIGHLY HEALTHY PEOPLE

Wellness is more than the absence of illness. It encompasses a person's total being – physical, mental, emotional, family, social, spiritual and occupational.

Wellness is about balance between the various aspects of a person's life. When things go wrong, it is often because these areas are out of balance.

Consider these suggestions for keeping your life in a healthy state of balance:

1. **Have fun exercising.** Walking outdoors for 30 minutes a day is good for your body and spirit. If this doesn't do it for you, find another form of exercise you enjoy.
2. **Eat well.** Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables, replacing most of the high-fat, heavily-processed foods in your diet.
3. **Get enough sleep** – something that probably doesn't happen for you now, as studies show most adults to be sleep deprived. You need to get sufficient sleep on

a regular basis to recharge your mental and physical batteries.

4. **Instead of fretting about life's problems, decide you will solve the ones you can and put aside the ones you can't.** Manage your stress by doing the most important things first and doing them well.
5. **Don't let other people get to you.** There will always be somebody who gets under your skin. Learn to laugh off unimportant conflicts.
6. **Keep learning throughout your life.** New ideas feed enthusiasm and exercise your brain. Learning also keeps you in contact with other people.

Wellness and safety go hand in hand. A mentally and emotionally fit worker is able to focus on the job.

FINAL WORD

If you aren't already, start incorporating health and wellness activities into your daily routine. Regular exercise can help you live a longer, happier and healthier life.

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SAFETY TALK

Did you Get the Memo on Office Hazards?

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

An office is almost like a second home to those that work there. Considering how much time a lot of us spend at our office it's easy to feel that way. It's also easy to feel comfortable and safe at the office, just like we do at home. But before you get too comfortable, here's a memo for you: Tens of thousands of injuries and work-related health problems affect office workers each year.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Here are four office hazards you may not have given much thought to:

Slips, trips and falls are often caused by boxes, files or other items piled in walkways. Hazards also include cords, open file cabinet drawers, unsafe use of a ladder or using a chair or box to reach something. These hazards can lead to broken bones, back injuries and injured pride.

Sitting and using a computer, phone, or staring at a monitor all day can cause a great deal of discomfort and ergonomic injuries to office workers. Improperly set up workstations and poor ergonomic work practices put workers at risk for ergonomic injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, eye strain, and headaches.

Poor indoor air quality is another potential hazard and also one you may not have a lot of control over. Odors and allergens from dust, office materials, and even the carpet can cause respiratory irritation. Faulty or not well maintained heating and cooling

systems can also lead to illness.

Damaged power cords, overloaded power strips and outlets are common office fire hazards you probably overlook on a daily basis. So too is blocked fire safety equipment such as sprinkler heads and portable fire extinguishers. Finally, the improper use of electrical appliances such as space heaters, coffee makers and microwaves are also potential office fire hazards.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Protecting against slips, trips and falls is easy.

- Clean up spills immediately.
- Keep boxes, files, cords and clutter picked up, put away and out of walkways.
- Push cabinet drawers in when not in use.
- Don't use chairs, boxes, or anything but a ladder or step-stool to reach items up on shelves or otherwise out of easy reach.
- Use all ladders safely and ask for help if you need it.

If you're experiencing ergonomic issues, such as pain, tingling or weakness, ask your supervisor for assistance adjusting your workstation. Ergonomic guidelines for office workstation setup include:

- Position the chair, keyboard and monitor in a straight line with your body.
- Maintain a relaxed, neutral posture.
- Sit up straight, adjusting the chair to provide

firm back support.

- Let your arms hang loosely at the shoulders.
- Keep your elbows at a 90-degree angle while typing.
- Use an adjustable keyboard tray to position your keyboard and mouse at a comfortable height (usually lower than the desk surface).
- Place your mouse next to the keyboard, and keep it as close as possible to your body, to avoid reaching.
- Adjust the chair's height so that your feet are firmly on the ground; and finally
- Take rest breaks to stretch and relax your muscles and your eyes.

While you may not have a lot of control over indoor air quality there are some things you can do. Don't wear heavy perfumes or cologne. Don't burn scented candles, which is also a fire hazard, and report indoor air quality concerns to your supervisor immediately.

Help prevent fires by following these easy tips:

- Inspect power cords regularly for damaged prongs, exposed or frayed wires. Never use a cord if the third prong has been damaged or removed. Replace if damaged.
- Don't overload outlets or power strips.
- Don't leave coffee pots on when they are empty and don't leave food cooking unattended in a microwave.
- Keep items clear of sprinkler heads; and
- Never block emergency exit routes or emergency exits.

SIX STATISTICS ON WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS

1. Extended computer work without periodic breaks can lead to muscular fatigue and

discomfort in these 4 parts of the body: the back, arms, shoulders and neck.

2. When working at a computer keyboard, a worker's elbows should be bent at an angle of about 90 degrees when the fingers are in the typing position.
3. Two other problems associated with extensive computer operation are eye strain and headaches.
4. Avoid sitting at a workstation for long periods without moving. Get up and stretch and try to move your back, neck and shoulders at least every 10 minutes.
5. In adjusting the height of your desk chair, remember these 2 things: Your thighs should be horizontal and your knees should be at right angles with your feet flat on the floor.
6. The healthy body can only tolerate staying in one position for about 20 minutes. After that time, most workers will experience discomfort.

FINAL WORD

Your office can be a safe and comfortable place to work. Do your part and put into practice the tips you just learned to prevent common office hazards.

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How to Maintain Cybersecurity for Your Remote Workers

Employers need to pay extra attention to securing the technology their remote workforce is using.

The growing COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic is providing plenty of new opportunities for cybercriminals to exploit unsecured technology systems, overworked information technology (IT) staff and panicked employees who are new to working from home.

Remote-access technologies are exposed to more external threats. Organizations “should assume that malicious parties will gain control of telework client devices and attempt to recover sensitive data from them or leverage the devices to gain access to the enterprise network,” said the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

“The impulse to send employees home to work is understandable, but companies and agencies without business continuity plans with a strong IT asset management component are going to be sitting ducks for breaches, hacking and data that is out there in the wild, beyond the control of the company,” said Barbara Rembiesa, president and CEO of the International Association of IT Asset Managers.

Onkar Birk, senior vice president of product strategy and engineering for Houston-based network security firm Alert Logic, said there has been a significant spike in the number of users connecting

to company networks and accessing sensitive data from home computers. “As the number of people logging in remotely or connecting to cloud-based SAAS [software-as-a-service] applications rises, the attack surface expands,” he said. “Organizations suddenly have an exponential increase in the number of endpoints and ... cyber adversaries are looking to capitalize on the chaos. An expanded attack surface combined with an influx of workers who are new to working remotely increases the opportunities and odds of success for cyberattacks.”

These are the areas organizations should focus on to shore up remote-work cybersecurity:

- Setting up and communicating remote-work security policies.
- Securing virtual private networks (VPNs).
- Regulating personal-device use.
- Addressing authorization and authentication.
- Communicating with employees about phishing and malware campaigns tailored to the current crisis.
- Securing communication and collaboration channels.
- Providing vigilant IT support.

DUST OFF THOSE REMOTE-WORK SECURITY PLANS

Christopher Buontempo, an attorney in the Boston

office of law firm Mintz, said that organizations first need to review information security policies to determine if there are any established security guidelines for remote work. "If no relevant plans or policies are in place, this is a good time to establish at least some basic guidelines to address remote access to company information systems and use by employees of personal devices for company business."

Managers should ensure that applicable security guidelines, plans and policies flow down to their teams. "Many employees do not work in security day to day, and some may have never worked remotely before," he said. "Companies should review plans to ensure that organizations are prepared for responding to a data breach or security incident."

If remote work is a new practice for a company, set standards, expectations and processes for your staff, said Trina Glass, an attorney with Stark & Stark in Lawrenceville, N.J. The most basic areas to address are whether employees will be using company-provided or personal devices and a VPN or a remote desktop, and whether work-from-home systems can be tested.

NETWORK SECURITY

Some workers may want to use unsecured public Wi-Fi. That's always inadvisable for work devices, and employers should discourage it. Many workers will be logging in to their personal Wi-Fi network and should make sure it is set up securely with a strong password.

Experts recommend that organizations require employees who are working remotely to use VPNs to help maintain end-to-end data encryption.

"Always use a VPN to connect remote workers to the organization's internal network," said Tony Anscombe, chief security evangelist at ESET, an IT security company based in Bratislava, Slovakia. "This

prevents man-in-the-middle attacks from remote locations. Remember that since people are now working from home, the traffic is flowing over public networks."

Anscombe advised employers to first determine who on the staff needs access to the organization's entire internal network, and who may just need access to cloud-based services and e-mail.

Guy Bruneau, a senior security consultant with IT security firm IPSS Inc., in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, said employers should frequently patch their VPNs with the latest security fixes and use multifactor authentication as another layer of protection against an expected increase in VPN phishing attacks.

Anscombe explained, "Multifactor authentication ensures that access, whether to cloud-based services or full network access, is by authorized users only."

Rembiesa recommended organizations also secure the cloud and SAAS applications that remote workers will be using in the coming months by ensuring identity and access control and encryption of data.

PERSONAL DEVICES

Many workers will have no choice but to use personal devices and home networks to get their job done. "One of the biggest cybersecurity risks is the personal device," Glass, of law firm Stark & Stark, said. "Whether smartphone or laptop, there are serious problems posed by using personal technology in a work setting involving sensitive information. Employees might save documents to their desktops or send document drafts to their personal e-mail. They may not have up-to-date antivirus software, or they may use outdated personal password protection."

Bring-your-own-device (BYOD) practices will need

to be critically tightened, Rembiesa said. “The reality is that the longer someone is out of the office, the more likely it is that they will do company business on their personal smartphone, computer, tablet or other BYOD asset. This creates a huge risk if the personal device is handed down, sold to a third party or improperly disposed of. In these scenarios, the exposure of sensitive company data may be entirely unintentional and end up becoming public.”

Anscombe said that ideally, access to the organization’s internal network would be allowed only on employer-provided devices because the devices would be under the management of the IT team. He also advised employers to ask their remote workforce to audit their home environment for vulnerabilities.

“There are continual disclosures regarding vulnerable Internet of things devices, and this is an excellent time for employees to take action on securing them with strong passwords and updating their software to the latest versions,” Anscombe said. Employers can also consider installing a monitoring app to scan home networks for vulnerabilities, outdated software or default passwords that need to be changed.

For companies that allow access to e-mail and cloud services from an employee’s personal device, Anscombe recommended enforcing the same endpoint security rules for antivirus software and customized firewalls as with employer-managed devices.

“If necessary, furnish the employee with a license for the same solutions used on the organization-owned devices,” he said. “If you need extra licenses, then contact the provider. They may have solutions to cover you through this unprecedented event.”

Limiting the ability to store, download or copy data on personal devices and setting controls on the use of external devices such as USB drives are

additional options. “Company information should never be downloaded or saved to employees’ personal devices or cloud services, including employee computers, thumb drives, or cloud services such as their personal Google Drive or Dropbox accounts,” Buontempo said.

AUTHENTICATION AND AUTHORIZATION

The rapid work-from-home mobilization has created an increased need for using multifactor authentication, monitoring access controls and creating strong passwords.

“Make sure solid firewall and passcode protections are in place for accessing company systems,” Rembiesa said.

For remote workers, having the right access to the right applications is critical for success, said Joseph Carson, chief security scientist at Thycotic, a cybersecurity firm in Washington, D.C. “A strong identity and access management solution will help automate the ability to switch or provision remote workers to the appropriate access methods and technologies,” he said. “Implementing ‘least privilege’ means granting only the minimum permissions required by an end user, application, service task or system to perform the jobs they have been assigned ... to help reduce the risk of exploitation without impacting productivity or involving IT.”

SECURING COLLABORATION APPS

Collaboration and messaging apps such as Microsoft Teams, Slack and WhatsApp have exploded in popularity in business settings over the last five years, representing an opportunity for hackers to use the platforms to infiltrate enterprise networks and gain access to sensitive company data.

“Consumers—who are also employees—have gotten used to and like this method of communication,” said Anurag Lal, president and

CEO of NetSfere, an enterprise messaging platform based in Chicago. “The challenge is that these platforms were never built to be secure at the enterprise level, where not only do you have to be sure that communications are secure when in transit, but also that the data is kept secure on users’ devices and when at rest within the network.”

Full control of these platforms by the enterprise is also important. “Anybody can build a group and start sending messages on WhatsApp, for example, and inadvertently include someone or forget to remove someone who should not be in the group,” Lal said.

Just last week, he was mistakenly invited into a Fortune 500 company’s confidential business continuity planning group via WhatsApp. He explained that to ensure data security, IT must control the distribution and use of the service and make sure the product is fully encrypted.

David Creelman, HR thought leader and the CEO of Creelman Research in Toronto, said that employers can try to ban the use of popular but not approved communication methods, “but we need to accept that humans will inevitably circumvent the policy. That means we need a second layer of defense: education. HR professionals need to be educated and reminded which data is so sensitive that they must never take a risk with it. If employees’ compensation data or medical data or psychometric assessment data is revealed, that’s very serious.”

ADDITIONAL WORK-FROM-HOME CYBERSECURITY TIPS

- Monitor employees’ remote-work practices. “Any potential for mischief or data abuse may be heightened in a work-from-home environment,” Rembiesa said. “Remember that most data breaches are caused by insiders, not outside hackers.”
- Be alert against phishing tactics in phony

e-mails. “Remind users to be suspicious of e-mails from unknown sources and to not open file attachments or click on links,” Alert Logic’s Birk said. “Stress the fact that cybercriminals will seek to capitalize on the current chaos, and make sure people know to exercise extreme caution with any e-mail that asks for credentials or other sensitive information.”

- Encrypt sensitive information, such as personnel, medical or financial records that are stored on, sent to or sent from remote devices. “Full-disk encryption of the computer’s hard drive ensures that even if the device falls into the wrong hands, the company’s data is not accessible,” Anscombe said.
- Provide cybersecurity awareness training, and keep IT resources well-staffed. Remote employees should have ready access to contact information for critical IT personnel to whom security incidents can be reported and who can assist with technical issues. “Remote workers need to have clear communication protocols for IT support and for crisis management if they encounter unusual or suspect issues that could be the result of a breach,” Anscombe said.

**By Roy Maurer | Reprinted with permission
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SAFETY TALK

What You Need to Know About Covid-19

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

According to the WHO, coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that range from the common cold to much more serious diseases. These diseases can infect both humans and animals. The strain that began spreading in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, is related to two other coronaviruses that have caused major outbreaks in recent years: severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Symptoms of a coronavirus infection range in severity from respiratory problems to cases of pneumonia, kidney failure and a buildup of fluid in the lungs.

Epidemiologists are still trying to determine exactly how deadly COVID-19 is.

About 2% of reported cases have been fatal, but many experts say the death rate could be lower. That's because early in an outbreak, mild illnesses may not be reported. If only people with severe illness — who are more likely to die — seek care, the virus will appear much more deadly than it really is because of all the uncounted people with milder symptoms.

Early in the outbreak, one expert estimated that although 2,000 cases had been reported, 100,000 people probably were sick. Under counting cases can artificially increase the infection's mortality rate.

COVID-19 spreads more easily than SARS and is similar to other coronaviruses that cause cold-like symptoms, experts have said. It appears to be highly transmissible, and since cases are mild, the disease may be more widespread than current testing numbers suggest. There have been reports of people transmitting the virus before they show symptoms, but most experts think this is probably not a major driver of new infections. What is concerning, however, is that symptoms can be mild, and the disease can clearly spread before people realize they're sick. SARS spread when people had full-blown illness, which is one reason it was possible to contain it — it was easier to tell who had the virus.

A report in the New England Journal of Medicine suggested COVID-19 reaches peak infectiousness shortly after people start to feel sick, spreading in the manner of the flu. A study published in JAMA chronicled the case of a 20-year-old Wuhan woman who appeared to infect five relatives, even though she never showed signs of illness.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Recognize the Symptoms

According to the WHO, signs of infection include fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death.

Current estimates of the incubation period – the amount of time between infection and the onset of symptoms – range from one to 14 days. Most

infected people show symptoms within five to six days. However, infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any symptoms despite having the virus in their systems.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Those with weakened immune systems, the elderly, and very young children are at greater risk.
- Healthcare providers and other professions with greater risk of exposure are more at risk.
- Those traveling to areas deemed of greater exposure risk.

HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE?

Epidemiology experts said the most important aspect of preparedness costs nothing at all — calm.

There are some basic precautions you can take, which are the same as what you should be doing every day to stave off other respiratory diseases. You've seen the guidance before: Wash your hands regularly. Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze. And when you're sick, stay home from work or school and drink lots of fluids.

The CDC recommends washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the bathroom, before eating and after blowing your nose or sneezing. It also advises not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth and to clean objects and surfaces you touch often.

Misconceptions & FAQs

Does spraying your body with alcohol or chlorine kill the virus? Doctors say don't try it. Aside from it potentially hurting you, it won't kill viruses that have already entered your body.

Can pets potentially spread the new coronavirus? The WHO says there is no evidence that cats or dogs can be infected, or spread the virus that causes COVID-19.

Do flu or pneumonia vaccines protect you from getting this strain of coronavirus? No. The flu vaccine is meant to protect you against influenza A and influenza B, and the pneumonia vaccine is to protect you against bacterial pneumonia. The pneumonia that is caused from COVID-19 is a viral pneumonia, there's no cure for that. The only treatment for that right now is supportive care, fluids, oxygen, Tylenol, ibuprofen — that sort of thing.

Do we need to prepare for a possible pandemic (buying canned goods, supplies etc.)? It's always a good idea to have some water, some canned foods in case of any emergency, whether it's a hurricane or a tornado or a viral pandemic. You don't have to go out and spend \$1,000 on groceries, but it's not a bad idea to have a supply at your home for safety purposes ... It's also very important to make sure you have a proper amount of medications and make sure they're stored properly as well.

How contagious is this strain of coronavirus?

This strain of the coronavirus, COVID-19, seems to be highly infectious, highly contagious, and is usually spread if someone is coughing and sneezing, and those particles get into your lungs, into your eyes, into your nose and into your mouth. That's why it's

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so important if you're coughing and sneezing, cough into your elbow. If you're sick — stay home. Don't go to work if you're sick, don't travel if you're sick and take common sense precautions.

Source: <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/coronavirus/busting-some-common-myths-and-misconceptions-surrounding-coronavirus/2309893/>

WHAT IF I HAVE COVID-19?

Stay home except to get medical care

People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to isolate at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home

People: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Animals: You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a facemask.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor If you have a

medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a facemask

You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Clean your hands often

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.

Soap and water are the best option if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid sharing personal household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they

should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Monitor your symptoms

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider’s office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed. Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring or facilitated self-monitoring should follow instructions provided by their local health department or occupational health professionals, as appropriate.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case

basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>

FINAL WORD

Infectious diseases, although not typically as widespread as COVID-19, are frightening things. Knowing what it is, how to protect yourself and how to stop the spread is important to keep you, your co-workers and your family safe and healthy.

SUPERVISOR SECRET

Are You Doing Enough to Protect Lone Workers?

Here are ten things to consider if you are responsible for the safety of lone workers.

#1 INVISIBLE WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Not every hazard can be seen before moving into an area. Although the health effects of poor air quality are often long-term, workers in high areas can be exposed to rising heat and fumes that can leave them unconscious away from help.

#2 TRIPS AND FALLS

Trips and falls are one of the most frequent causes of workplace injury. These hazards can affect employees at any workplace, despite job responsibilities or other contributing factors.

#3 HEAVY EQUIPMENT ACCIDENTS

Heavy equipment accidents can take many forms, and the resulting injuries such as machine entanglement have been identified among the most common workplace injuries. Following heavy equipment accidents, lone workers can be left immobilized away from assistance.

#4 ENVIRONMENTAL DANGERS

For employees working outdoors, the environment itself can pose many risks. Besides threats from exposure including heat stroke and hypothermia, workers may encounter attacks from wild animal.

#5 EMPLOYEES UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE

Many safety systems rely on workers to call for the people nearby when they need help. Unfortunately, it's impossible to predict situations where someone

will be unable to call for help when they need it, ranging from medical emergencies to situations of extreme workplace violence.

#6 REMOTE WORKERS IN DISTRESS

Remote workers are a special case, because in very remote areas employers can face an incredible challenge locating a missing worker. Tracking employees with GPS is a start, but additional details are necessary since an employee can become separated from the equipment that's tracking them.

#7 MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

To protect their workers, employers need to plan for health-related dangers that can't be anticipated. Medical emergencies like heart attacks and severe allergic reactions can be sudden and happen anywhere.

#8 HAZARDOUS OBJECTS

Whether working in construction, warehousing, or even retail, workers are often put at risk by the objects near them as they work. Injuries from being struck by or against nearby objects can be serious and include cuts, lacerations, and concussions.

#9 VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS

Lone workers often need to be mobile, meaning that vehicles are part of their daily routine. Just like when employees are at a worksite, employers are responsible for the safety of their employees when they travel.

#10 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

People don't always recognize that when they work with the public, they are working alone. Employees working with the public who can easily become isolated are particularly at risk of violent attacks.

DID YOU KNOW?

MOST OF US KNOW SOMEONE who's struggled with mental health issues. Whether it's depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder or another problem, mental health issues are common. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 3.9% of adults aged 18 and older have experienced serious psychological distress in the past 30 days.

- 6% of persons aged 12 and older have depression in any two-week period.
- 4% of children aged 6 to 17 have been diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 10 to 34-year-old. (Unintentional injury is the leading cause in this age group.)

The Well At Everyday Health provided a survey with TAKEAWAYS.

- Almost 1/3 of survey say they visited a doctor about something stress-related.
- 57 percent of the survey respondents say they are paralyzed by stress; 43 percent say they are invigorated by stress.
- 51 percent of the women surveyed say they don't see friends at all in an average week.
- 59 percent of baby boomers have never been diagnosed with a mental health issue; 52 percent of Gen Zers already have been.
- Just over a third of all respondents say their job or career is a regular source of stress. Among millennials and Gen Zers, the chronically work-stressed rises to 44 percent.
- More than half of women (51 percent)

say they feel bad about their appearance weekly, and 28 percent say their appearance regularly causes them stress. Only 34 percent of men say they feel bad about their appearance weekly.

- 52 percent of respondents say financial issues regularly stress them out, well above the 35 percent who cited jobs and careers as the next most common stressor.
- 47 percent of all respondents — with women and men almost evenly matched — say that their response to stress is to take it out on themselves.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that "approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. (46.6 million) experience mental illness in a given year. This breaks down into:

- 1% (2.4 million) of American adults living with schizophrenia.
- 6% (6.1 million) living with bipolar disorder.
- 9% (16 million) living with major depression.
- 1% (42 million) living with anxiety disorders.

Mental Health America in 2019 Report

- Over 44 million American adults (18.07%), have a mental health condition. That actually represents a slight decrease from the 2015 report, which found 18.19% of adults had a mental health condition. The rate of youth experiencing a mental health issue continued rising, and 62% of teens and children with a major depressive episode received no treatment.
- Access to care is improving, but most Americans still have no access to care. The report states that 12.2% (5.3 million) adults with a mental illness remain uninsured, and 56.4% of adults with a mental illness received

no treatment.

KEEP IN MIND

Mental health problems are common in the United States and around the world. Mental health issues, much like other health issues, can be mild, but can also be life altering, affecting the emotional, social, and psychological well-being of the person. Common types of mental illness include mood disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and personality disorders. Common symptoms of mental health issues include changes in sleeping and eating habits, social withdrawal, feelings of hopelessness, anger, and prolonged sadness, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse.

Depression is one of the most common types of mental disorders. Depression is more common among younger people and females are more susceptible than males. Disparities in poor mental health in the U.S. exist among the various races and ethnicities, as well as among the different states. American Indians/Alaska Natives report the highest rates of poor mental health, while Asians/Pacific Islanders report the lowest rates.

Substance abuse has been known to promote symptoms of mental illness and those with mental illness will often abuse substances as a form of self-medication.

Those suffering from mental illness use illicit drugs of all kinds at higher rates than those without such illness.

Treatment for mental health issues can come in many different forms and depends on the type and severity of the disorder. Common treatment methods include psychotherapy, behavioral therapy or counseling, medication, hospitalization, or support groups. Somewhat ironically, the use of psychedelic drugs has also recently been explored in treating a number of mental health disorders. The most common types of professionals

seen for treatment among adults with a major depressive episode include a general practitioner or family doctor, psychiatrist, psychotherapist, or psychologist.

Research shows that chronic stress is a national epidemic for all genders and ages, particularly those who are 25 to 35 years old. To unpack this problem is a matter partly of mental health and partly of physical health. Here's the hard truth: The causes and solutions to chronic stress are a complex mixture of socioeconomic, environmental, genetic, physical, and spiritual factors.

Although there are different types of stress (some are even positive), the type we need to pay attention to, say experts, is chronic stress. This is the stress that makes it hard to sleep well, makes it nearly impossible to lose weight, and finds us fighting one cold after another. It's the stress that can both cause medical conditions and trigger and exacerbate flare-ups from existing conditions. This kind of stress depresses the immune system, alters our moods, and damages our professional and personal relationships. Just as, on the positive side, yoga has been shown to lengthen the protective caps at the ends of our DNA strands called telomeres and keep us more youthful, ongoing stress can actually change our DNA for the worse.

Based on the epidemiological (or population-based data curated by organizations like the CDC), the most prevalent mental health disorders are anxiety, number one, and then depression closely following it. Bipolar disorder and schizophrenia trail behind, but are still fairly prevalent conditions.

20% of people in the country have some form of mental health issue at some point in their lives, with less than 5% having severe problems with mental health issues, such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or another less common, severe mental health issue.

Another issue that takes a big toll is substance abuse and alcohol use disorders. Statistics from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health that indicate more than 25% of adults in the U.S. report binge drinking in the past 30 days. (Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks in a sitting, and a drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 8-9 ounces of malt liquor, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of spirits.) The CDC also reports that 1 in 6 U.S. adults binge drinks four times a month. The NSDUH reports that 6.2% of adults, or approximately 15 million people, have an alcohol use disorder, and 2.5% of teenagers have an alcohol use disorder.

The statistics and current trends in mental health are especially troublesome. A recent article from CDC talks about depression among teenagers. The rate of increase from 2009 to 2017 has increased over this time by 52%.

Contact Info



1.800.667.9300



Info@safetynow.com