

COVID-19 | underlying issues

ERGO IMPACTS

Work and school from home give physical therapists added work

BY MICHAEL KOHN • The Bulletin

The economic impacts of the pandemic are well known, but now a new problem has emerged — the ergonomic impacts of the pandemic.

Hunched over kitchen tables, sprawled out on floors and propped up on beds — working from home can be, quite literally, a pain in the neck.

Doctors who specialize in orthopedics and physical therapy have also noticed the anomaly. There's been a surge in patients coming into places like Living Well Therapy in Bend, where Dr. Erik Zamboni works as the clinical director. They are complaining of sore necks and backs after doing, well, nothing.

"A lot of people are now working from home but they don't have the ergonomic desk that they are used to," said Zamboni. "They may be cramped in less than ideal conditions, so we are seeing more neck and lower back pain related to ergonomics and posture."

The pandemic initially delayed surgeries and kept athletes off the field, which limited work for physical therapists, but recent months have shown a new trend — kinks in backs and necks caused by working at home.

That has been the problem for Doug Robbins, a patient of Living Well Therapy, who uses an office chair with lumbar support at his place of work. But he's worked from home on-and-off for much of the past year, and the lack of a standard office setup has caused musculoskeletal strains.

"If I sit too long I get some numbness in my feet," said Robbins.

On the recommendations of his physical therapist, Robbins has a new set up at home — a stand-up desk on an island in his kitchen. Phone calls are sometimes shifted to an outdoor "office" so other family members can work and study in silence.

Dr. Jason Kremer, a chiropractor and sports medicine doctor, said the physical downsides of working from home have only been exacerbated by winter. The early darkness means even more time spent indoors, huddled over devices.

In particular, Kremer said, he is seeing increasing numbers of patients coming in with complaints of migraines.

"We are seeing more people with headaches, from looking down at their screens," said Kremer, who owns Wellness Doctor in Bend. "Headaches from posture imbalances."

He adds that at the workplace, many employers hire professionals to assess ergonomics, something that doesn't happen at home.

Another anomaly is the number of young people who are coming in for appointments to deal with back and neck ailments. In school, kids sit at a desk, at home they may be laying on the floor or on their beds.

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Jeni Roberts receives chiropractic treatment from Jason Kremer at the Wellness Doctor in Bend on Wednesday.

Dean Guernsey/For The Bulletin

Getty Images

'This mall is going down'

Portland's Lloyd Center on the brink as businesses depart en masse

BY JAMIE GOLDBERG
The Oregonian

Ishmail Chorduky, the owner of Stitchworks Custom Embroidery, has operated two centrally-located kiosks at the Lloyd Center mall for almost a decade. From his post next to Lloyd Center's iconic ice skating rink, Chorduky has witnessed the Northeast Portland mall's rapid decline firsthand.

The mall lost Nordstrom in 2015. Sears and Marshalls then moved

out in 2018. Lloyd Center's problems only intensified last year amid the coronavirus pandemic as anchor tenants and signature businesses departed en masse.

Chorduky said he was shocked when Victoria's Secret vacated its long-held spot across from his kiosks. Macy's then announced in December that it would leave its 298,000-square-foot space and lay off all 83 of its Lloyd Center employees, becoming the fourth anchor store to

depart in the last six years. All three floors the department store occupied on the mall's south side are now completely empty, leaving a massive void.

Chorduky said he has asked mall management multiple times whether the center might close for good. He said he has received no response. But he no longer sees a future at the mall for his business. He is planning to leave and open a store elsewhere.

See *Lloyd Center* / C2

Jamie Goldberg/The Oregonian

Lloyd Center is facing an existential crisis that has only intensified during the pandemic as anchor tenants and signature businesses have departed en masse.