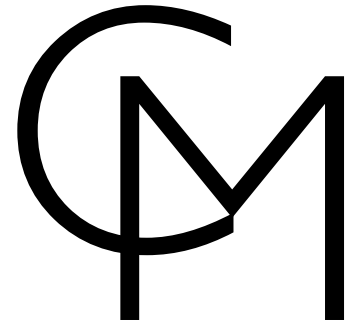


# The California Merchant

*News for the California Merchant Safety Association*



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## **Flexibility is the key to a happy workplace**

In today's dynamic world, flexibility extends beyond just physical prowess; it embodies adaptability, resilience, and openness to change. Whether we're talking about physical flexibility that allows us to move with ease or the mental flexibility that enables us to navigate life's challenges with grace, both are invaluable assets. To enhance physical flexibility, incorporating regular stretching routines into our daily lives is paramount. Activities such as yoga, Pilates, or simple daily stretches can significantly improve joint mobility and muscle flexibility. Additionally, engaging in activities that challenge our range of motion, such as dance or martial arts, can further enhance our body's adaptability and agility.

However, flexibility isn't limited to the physical realm; it plays a crucial role in our mental and emotional well-being as well. Cultivating mental flexibility involves adopting a growth mindset, embracing change, and being open to new perspectives and ideas. Practicing mindfulness and meditation can help us become more present and adaptable to life's ever-changing circumstances. Moreover, actively seeking out diverse experiences, engaging in continuous learning, and challenging our existing beliefs and assumptions can further broaden our mental horizons and enhance our flexibility.

Practicing mental flexibility in a workplace environment is crucial for adapting to changing circumstances, fostering innovation, and enhancing collaboration. Here are some practical ways to cultivate mental flexibility in the workplace:



### **Embrace Change and Adaptability**

Foster a culture that embraces change and encourages adaptability. Recognize that change is inevitable and view it as an opportunity for growth and innovation. Encourage team members to be open to new ideas, perspectives, and ways of doing things.

### **Encourage Diverse Perspectives and Ideas**

Create an inclusive environment that values diverse perspectives and encourages collaborative problem-solving. Encourage team members to share their ideas, challenge conventional thinking, and explore innovative solutions to challenges.

### **Practice Active Listening and Empathy**

Cultivate active listening skills and practice empathy in your interactions

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## Flexibility: View failures as opportunities to learn

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with colleagues. Listen attentively to others' viewpoints, validate their experiences, and seek to understand their perspectives before responding. This fosters a culture of mutual respect and open communication.

### Develop Problem-Solving Skills

Encourage the development of problem-solving skills and critical thinking among team members. Encourage collaborative problem-solving, where team members work together to identify challenges, explore solutions, and implement strategies to address them

### Promote Continuous Learning and Growth

Foster a culture of continuous learning and growth by providing opportunities for professional development, training, and skill-building. Encourage team members to pursue learning opportunities, explore new areas of interest, and develop new skills that enhance their adaptability and flexibility.

### Manage Stress and Prioritize Well-being

Recognize the importance of managing stress and prioritizing well-being in the workplace. Encourage team members to practice self-care, take breaks when needed, and seek support when experiencing stress or burnout. A healthy and well-supported team is better equipped to adapt and thrive in a changing environment.

### Celebrate Successes and Learn from Failures

Celebrate successes, achievements, and milestones as a team, recognizing the contributions of each member. Additionally, create a culture where failures are viewed as learning opportunities. Encourage team members to reflect on setbacks, identify lessons learned, and apply insights to future endeavors.

By cultivating a culture of mental flexibility, organizations can adapt more effectively to changing circumstances, foster innovation, and enhance collaboration among team members.

## Elevate your mood on these short winter days

**H**ave you ever felt like you're stuck in a rut, and that feeling of happiness or wellbeing just seems out of reach? There are some simple, everyday things you can do to lift your spirits and increase your sense of wellbeing.

### Get Moving!

First things first, let's talk about the magic of movement. No, I'm not asking you to run a marathon (unless you want to!). Even a simple 10-minute walk can do wonders. Exercise releases endorphins, which are your body's natural feel-good chemicals. So, whether it's dancing in your living room or taking a stroll in the park, get that body moving!

### Connect with Others

Humans are social beings. Building and maintaining relationships can significantly impact our happiness. Pick

up the phone, schedule that coffee date, or simply send a text to check in on someone. Connecting with others not only boosts our mood but also strengthens our sense of belonging.

### Practice Gratitude

Sometimes, we get so caught up in our daily hustle that we forget to appreciate the little things. Start a gratitude journal or simply take a few moments each day to reflect on what you're thankful for. It could be as simple as enjoying a warm cup of coffee in the morning or receiving a kind gesture from a stranger. Focusing on the positives can shift your perspective and increase your overall sense of wellbeing.

### Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness is all about being present in the moment. It's about paying attention to

your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgment. Incorporating mindfulness practices or meditation into your daily routine can help reduce stress, enhance self-awareness, and promote a sense of calmness.

### Engage in Activities You Love

Do more of what makes you happy! Whether it's painting, playing an instrument, gardening, or reading a book, make time for activities that bring you joy. Engaging in hobbies or interests not only provides a sense of fulfillment but also acts as a great stress reliever.

### Prioritize Self-Care

Taking care of yourself is crucial for your overall wellbeing. Set aside time for self-care activities that rejuvenate your mind, body, and soul. It could be a

relaxing bath, practicing yoga, listening to your favorite music, or simply getting a good night's sleep. Remember, self-care is not selfish; it's essential.

### Limit Negative Inputs

In today's digital age, we are constantly bombarded with information from various sources. While it's essential to stay informed, it's equally important to limit exposure to negative news or toxic content that can drain our energy and affect our mood. Be mindful of what you consume, both online and offline.

Increasing your sense of wellbeing and happiness doesn't require grand gestures or drastic changes. Sometimes, small, consistent efforts can make a significant difference. Remember, your happiness is worth it! Here's to a happier, healthier you!

# New under-desk treadmill? Use it safely

At the beginning of the year, many people set goals to move more, even at work. The quest for innovative solutions to combat the adverse effects of prolonged sitting has led to the rise of under-desk treadmills. These ingenious devices offer the promise of staying active and energized while working, but like any piece of equipment, they require proper understanding and precautions to ensure safety and effectiveness.

If you're considering integrating an under-desk treadmill into your office setup or are already a proud owner, here's a comprehensive guide to help you use it safely and maximize its benefits.

## 1. Familiarize Yourself with the Equipment

Before using the under-desk treadmill, thoroughly read the user manual and familiarize yourself with its features, settings, and safety guidelines. Understanding how to operate the treadmill correctly is the first step towards safe usage.

## 2. Choose the Right Location

Place the treadmill on a flat, stable surface that can support its weight and minimize vibrations. Ensure the area around the treadmill is clear of obstacles to allow for safe and unrestricted movement.

## 3. Proper Footwear is Key

Opt for supportive, flat-soled shoes with good traction to ensure a firm grip on the treadmill surface. Avoid wearing heels, open-toed shoes, or footwear that can slip easily.

## 4. Start Slow and Gradual

Start with a slow and comfortable walking pace to familiarize yourself with the treadmill's movement. Gradually increase the speed and incline as you become more accustomed to using the device.



## 5. Maintain Proper Posture

Maintain proper posture while walking on the treadmill. Keep your back straight, shoulders relaxed, and gaze forward to prevent strain on your neck, back, and shoulders. Consider using a supportive chair or ergonomic accessories to enhance posture and comfort.

## 6. Listen to Your Body

Pay attention to how your body feels while using the treadmill. If you experience discomfort, dizziness, or pain, stop using the treadmill immediately and consult with a healthcare professional if necessary.

## 7. Take Breaks and Stay Hydrated

Keep a water bottle within reach and stay hydrated while using the treadmill. Take regular breaks to stretch, move around, and give your body a rest from walking.

## 8. Engage in Multi-Tasking Mindfully

If you're using the treadmill while

working, ensure you can maintain focus and productivity. Avoid engaging in tasks that require intense concentration or fine motor skills to prevent distractions and potential safety risks.

## 9. Regular Maintenance and Inspection

Regularly inspect and maintain the treadmill to ensure it's in good working condition. Check for any signs of wear and tear, loose parts, or malfunctions and address them promptly to prevent accidents or injuries.

Incorporating an under-desk treadmill into your office routine can be a game-changer for your health and well-being, but it's essential to prioritize safety and responsible usage. By familiarizing yourself with the equipment, choosing the right location, wearing appropriate footwear, starting slow, maintaining proper posture, listening to your body, staying hydrated, engaging in mindful multitasking, and ensuring regular maintenance, you can enjoy the benefits of active workdays with confidence and peace of mind. Remember, safety first, and happy walking!

# Time for reading glasses? Eyes change with age

As we journey through our lives, our bodies undergo various changes, and our eyes are no exception. Aging brings about a series of transformations in our eyes and vision that can impact our daily activities and quality of life. Understanding these changes and knowing how to mitigate their effects is crucial for maintaining optimal eye health and preserving vision. Let's delve into the effects of aging on the eyes and explore strategies to mitigate them.

## 1. Common Age-Related Changes in the Eyes

- **Presbyopia:** One of the most common age-related changes is presbyopia, a condition where the eye's natural lens loses its flexibility, making it difficult to focus on close objects. This typically becomes noticeable around the age of 40 and may require reading glasses or bifocals for clear vision.

- **Reduced Pupil Size and Light Sensitivity:** As we age, the muscles that control pupil size and response to light may become less efficient, leading to increased sensitivity to glare and reduced ability to adapt to changes in lighting conditions.

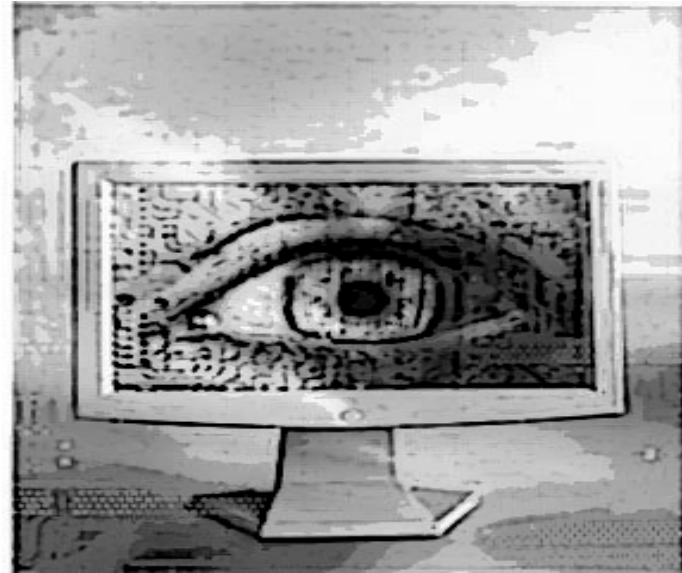
- **Dry Eyes:** Aging can affect the production of tears, leading to dry eyes, which may cause discomfort, irritation, and blurry vision.

- **Changes in Color Perception:** Some individuals may experience a decline in color perception or difficulty distinguishing between certain colors as they age.

## 2. Age-Related Eye Diseases

- **Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD):** AMD is a leading cause of vision loss among older adults. It affects the macula, the central part of the retina responsible for sharp, central vision, making activities like reading and driving challenging.

- **Cataracts:** Cataracts occur when the lens of the eye becomes cloudy, leading to blurred or cloudy



vision, sensitivity to light, and difficulty seeing at night.

- **Glaucoma:** Glaucoma is a group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve, often due to increased pressure within the eye. It can lead to peripheral vision loss and, if untreated, may result in blindness.

## 3. Strategies to Mitigate Age-Related Vision Changes

- **Regular Eye Exams:** Schedule regular comprehensive eye exams to detect and monitor age-related eye conditions and ensure early intervention if necessary.

- **Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Adopting a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and avoiding smoking, can support overall eye health.

- **Proper Lighting:** Ensure adequate lighting in your environment, especially when reading or engaging in close-up tasks, to reduce eye strain and discomfort.

- **Use Corrective Lenses:** If you experience difficulty focusing on

close objects, consider using reading glasses, bifocals, or progressive lenses to enhance clarity and comfort.

- **Manage Dry Eyes:** Use artificial tears or lubricating eye drops to alleviate dryness and maintain moisture in the eyes. Consider using a humidifier in your living environment to prevent dryness.

- **Protect Your Eyes:** Wear sunglasses with 100% UV protection and protective eyewear when engaging in activities that pose a risk of eye injury or exposure to harmful substances.

While aging brings about changes in our eyes and vision, understanding these changes and adopting proactive measures can help mitigate their effects and preserve visual health. By prioritizing regular eye care, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, using corrective lenses as needed, and protecting our eyes from potential harm, we can embrace the golden years with clear vision and optimal eye health. Remember, your eyes are precious, and with proper care and attention, you can enjoy a lifetime of clear and vibrant vision.

# Navigating age-related vision changes at work

**N**avigating the effects of aging on vision in the workplace requires proactive strategies to ensure comfort, productivity, and safety. Here are some practical ways people can manage age-related vision changes at work:



## Optimize Workspace Ergonomics

- **Proper Lighting:** Ensure your workspace is well-lit with adjustable lighting to reduce glare and shadows. Use task lighting directed towards your workspace to enhance visibility, especially when reading or working on detailed tasks.

- **Adjust Monitor Settings:** Adjust the brightness, contrast, and font size on your computer monitor to reduce eye strain and improve readability. Consider using anti-glare screens or filters to minimize reflections and glare from overhead lighting or windows.

- **Organize Your Workspace:** Keep your desk organized and clutter-free to minimize visual distractions and make it easier to locate and access items.

## Use Assistive Devices and Tools

- **Corrective Lenses:** If you wear glasses or contact lenses, ensure your prescription is up-to-date and appropriate for your work tasks. Consider bifocals, trifocals, or progressive lenses if you need multiple prescriptions for close-up and distance vision.

- **Magnifying Tools:** Use magnifying tools or devices to enhance visibility when reading small print or working on detailed tasks.

- **Voice-Activated**

**Technology:** Consider using voice-activated technology or screen-reading software to reduce the strain on your eyes when reading or working on the computer for extended periods.

## Practice Visual Comfort Strategies

- **Follow the 20-20-20 Rule:** Take regular breaks to rest your eyes and prevent eye strain. Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds to relax your eye muscles and reduce fatigue.

- **Blink Frequently:** Remember to blink frequently to keep your eyes lubricated and prevent dryness, especially when focusing intently on your work.

- **Eye Exercises:** Incorporate simple eye exercises, such as eye rolls, focusing on near and far objects, or gentle eye massages, to relax your eye muscles and improve circulation.

## Communicate with Your Team

- **Open Communication:** Communicate with your team and supervisors about any vision-related challenges you may be experiencing. Discuss potential accommodations or adjustments that can support your visual needs and enhance your work performance.

- **Collaborate Effectively:** Utilize collaboration tools, such as screen-sharing, video conferencing, or shared documents, to facilitate effective communication and collaboration with your team, regardless of your visual abilities.

## Prioritize Eye Health and Well-being

- **Regular Eye Exams:** Schedule regular eye exams to monitor your vision and address any changes or concerns promptly. Early detection and intervention can help prevent potential complications and maintain optimal visual health.

- **Healthy Habits:** Maintain a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate hydration, and sufficient sleep, to support overall eye health and well-being.

Managing age-related vision changes in the workplace requires awareness, proactive strategies, and effective communication. By optimizing your workspace, utilizing assistive devices, practicing visual comfort strategies, collaborating with your team, prioritizing eye health, and seeking regular eye care, you can navigate the challenges of aging eyes with confidence and continue to thrive in your professional endeavors. Remember, your vision is a valuable asset, and with proper care and support, you can maintain clarity and comfort in your work environment.

# The damaging effects of excess moisture

Moisture is a silent intruder that can wreak havoc in our homes and workplaces, especially in the winter months. From causing structural damage to jeopardizing our health, the consequences of excess moisture are far-reaching and potentially devastating. In this article, we will explore the damaging effects of moisture in both domestic and professional settings.



issues, including headaches, fatigue, and respiratory problems. In the workplace, this can lead to reduced employee comfort and productivity.

## Challenges in Maintaining Comfort

Excess moisture can make indoor spaces uncomfortable by creating a muggy and oppressive atmosphere. This discomfort can impact both residential and workplace environments, making it more challenging to focus and perform daily tasks.

## Structural Damage and Decay

Excess moisture can be a primary catalyst for structural damage in buildings. It infiltrates walls, ceilings, and floors, leading to mold growth and weakening of construction materials. Wooden structures are particularly vulnerable, as moisture can cause rot and decay, compromising the integrity of the building. In workplaces, structural damage can lead to costly repairs and even health and safety hazards for employees.

## Mold and Mildew Growth

Moisture provides the perfect breeding ground for mold and mildew, which are not only unsightly but also pose health risks. Mold spores released into the air can be inhaled, leading to respiratory problems, allergies, and other health issues. In the workplace, mold growth can result in employee absenteeism, decreased productivity, and potential legal liabilities.

## Health Implications

Exposure to excess moisture can have significant health implications, especially for those with respiratory conditions such as asthma and allergies. Damp environments can trigger or exacerbate these conditions, leading to discomfort and a reduced quality of life. The impact on employees' health in the workplace can result in increased sick days and decreased overall productivity.

## Pest Infestations

Moisture can attract pests like termites, ants, and cockroaches, which are drawn to damp environments. These unwelcome guests can damage property, contaminate food, and create unhygienic conditions. Workplace environments must be vigilant in preventing pest infestations, as they can lead to disruption and employee discomfort.

## Electrical Problems

Water and electricity do not mix well. Moisture infiltration can lead to electrical problems, creating a potentially dangerous situation. In both homes and workplaces, electrical issues stemming from moisture can result in fires or electrocution risks. It is crucial to address moisture-related electrical problems promptly to avoid these hazards.

## Material and Equipment Damage

In workplaces, excess moisture can damage sensitive equipment, leading to costly repairs or replacements. This is particularly relevant in settings like data centers, laboratories, and manufacturing facilities where precise environmental conditions are critical.

## Decreased Indoor Air Quality

High indoor humidity levels, often caused by excess moisture, can lead to decreased indoor air quality. Poor air quality can contribute to various health

## Prevention and Mitigation

To combat the damaging effects of moisture in homes and workplaces, prevention and mitigation strategies are crucial. These include:

1. Proper ventilation: Ensure that spaces are well-ventilated to reduce humidity and moisture buildup.
2. Regular inspections: Conduct routine checks for leaks and signs of moisture infiltration.
3. Dehumidifiers: Use dehumidifiers in areas prone to moisture issues.
4. Maintenance: Address issues promptly, such as repairing leaks and maintaining proper insulation.
5. Educating occupants: Ensure that individuals in the home or workplace are aware of the importance of moisture control and its impact on health and property.

From structural damage to health risks and decreased productivity, the consequences of excess moisture are many. It is essential to prioritize moisture prevention and mitigation measures to safeguard our well-being and protect our property from its detrimental effects.

# SAFETY ... IT PAYS



## Follow these guidelines for safer lifting

Consider the following options that will reduce reaching and bending, reduce the stress on your back and shoulders, and reduce the effort and force needed to perform work tasks.

Guidelines for safer lifting:

Plan the workflow to eliminate unnecessary lifts.

Organize the work so that the physical demands and work pace increase gradually.

Minimize the distances loads are lifted and lowered.

Position pallet loads of materials at a height that allows workers to lift and lower within their power zone.

Avoid manually lifting or lowering loads to or from the floor.

Store materials and/or products off the floor.



Arrange materials to arrive on pallets, and keep materials on pallets during storage.

Use a forklift to lift or lower the entire pallet of material, rather than lifting or lowering the material individually.

Arrange to have material off-loaded directly onto storage shelves. Store only

lightweight or infrequently lifted items on the floor.

Use mechanical devices (e.g., lifts, hoists ) whenever possible.

Avoid designing jobs that require workers to lift or lower materials to or from floor level.

For loads that are unstable and/or heavy:

Tag the load to alert workers.

Test the load for stability and weight before carrying the load.

Use mechanical devices or equipment to lift the load.

Reduce the weight of the load by:

Putting fewer items in the container.

Using a smaller and/or lighter-weight container.

Repack containers so contents will not shift and the weight is balanced.

Use team lifting as a temporary measure for heavy or bulky objects.

Reduce the frequency of lifting and the amount of time employees perform lifting tasks by:

Rotating workers in lifting tasks with other workers in non-lifting tasks.

Having workers alternate lifting tasks with non-lifting tasks.

Clear spaces to improve access to materials or products being handled. Easy access allows workers to get closer and reduces reaching, bending, and twisting.

## OSHA CORNER

Please visit the following address on the web to download helpful safety posters, guides and pamphlets for a safer workplace.

<https://www.osha.gov/publications>



## Fostering a culture of appreciation in the workplace

Let's talk about something that can make a world of difference in our day-to-day grind – boosting morale at work. We've all been there, staring at our screens, feeling a little less enthusiastic than usual. But what if there were simple ways to uplift spirits and create a more positive work environment? Spoiler alert: there are! Let's dive into some practical strategies.

Transparency and open communication are the backbone of a thriving workplace. Encourage team members to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. Organize regular team meetings, one-on-one check-ins, or even anonymous suggestion boxes. When employees feel heard and valued, their morale receives a significant boost.

Never underestimate the power of a simple 'thank you.' Recognizing and appreciating the efforts of your team members can go a long way. Celebrate milestones, acknowledge achievements, and regularly express gratitude. A little acknowledgment can make employees feel valued and motivated to give their best.

Ways to thank employees include:

- Personal note or email expressing appreciation for specific contributions and efforts
- Public recognition during team meetings, company events, or in newsletters to foster a culture of appreciation
- Offer professional development opportunities such as workshops or training programs to support employees' growth and skills



- Provide tangible rewards or incentives such as gift cards, bonuses, extra paid time off, or company merchandise to recognize exceptional performance

- Organize team activities to celebrate achievements collectively (team lunch, happy hour, fun team-building activity)

- Take the time to listen to ideas, feedback, and concerns. Show an interest in their perspectives and contributions.

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial for overall well-being. Encourage flexible working hours, promote taking breaks, and discourage overtime unless absolutely necessary. When employees feel they have time for themselves and their families, they're more likely to be productive and engaged at work.

Create a workspace where positivity thrives. Encourage collaboration, celebrate diversity, and promote a culture of respect and inclusivity. Organize team-building

activities, workshops, or outings that foster camaraderie and strengthen bonds among team members.

Invest in the professional growth and development of your employees. Offer training programs, workshops, or opportunities for advancement. When employees see a clear path for growth and development, they're more likely to be engaged, motivated, and satisfied in their roles.

A healthy employee is a happy employee. Implement wellness initiatives such as providing healthy snacks, organizing fitness challenges, or offering mental health resources. Encouraging physical and mental well-being not only boosts morale but also enhances productivity and reduces absenteeism.

Create a culture of celebration. Whether it's reaching a project milestone, closing a significant deal, or simply wrapping up a challenging week, take the time to celebrate successes together. Organize team outings, host appreciation events, or even just have a pizza party in the office. Celebrations foster a sense of achievement and camaraderie among team members.

Boosting morale at work doesn't require extravagant measures or a hefty budget. Simple, genuine gestures, open communication, and a positive work environment can make all the difference. Remember, a motivated and happy team is the cornerstone of a successful and thriving organization. So, let's prioritize morale, uplift each other, and create workplaces where everyone thrives. Cheers to a happier, more productive work environment!

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