

Safety Matters

Brought to you by



December 2007

Ergonomics in the Work Place

Ergonomics involves design factors in the work place, intended to maximize productivity by minimizing operator fatigue and discomfort. OSHA has placed guidelines on ergonomics to prevent injuries and illnesses that affect the musculoskeletal system (MSD). At this time, there is not a single diagnosis for ergonomic injuries, but following OSHA rules and regulations should help decrease future musculoskeletal disorders.

Common Ergonomic Injuries

1. **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)** - The most common cause of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is inflammation of the tendons in the carpal tunnel which can be attributed to repetitive use of the hand and/or wrist in awkward positions.
2. **Tendonitis** – Tendonitis is inflammation or irritation of a tendon. The condition causes pain and tenderness just outside a joint and can occur in any of your body's tendons. Tendonitis is common around your shoulders, elbows, wrists and heels.
3. **Eye Strain** – An ophthalmological condition that manifests itself through symptoms such as fatigue, red eyes, blurred vision, headache and occasional double vision. Symptoms often occur after reading, computer work, or other activities that involve tedious visual tasks.
4. **Thoracic Outlet Syndrome (TOS)** - Consists of a group of distinct disorders that affect the nerves that pass into the arms from the neck.
5. **Muscle Strain** – An injury to a muscle in which the muscle fibers tear as a result of overstretching. Typical symptoms of a strain include localized pain, stiffness, inflammation, and bruising around the strained muscle.



Proper Lifting Technique

Ergonomic Risk Factors

- **Awkward body postures:** maintaining an awkward, unsupported or fixed posture such as bending, reaching or twisting for prolonged periods.
- **Excessive repetition:** doing the same motions over and over again.
- **Excessive force:** physical exertion or pressure on any part of the body while lifting, pushing, pulling or gripping a tool.
- **Contact stress:** pressure by tools, edges or hard surfaces on soft tissues of the body. The palms and elbows are often at high risk.
- **Vibration:** using vibrating or impact tools and equipment.



Back Belt

Employer Ergonomic Guidelines

To ensure accommodation, compatibility and operability, employers must consider the following when assigning tasks to employees:

1. Be aware of ergonomics risks and prevention strategies.
2. Provide ergonomic training to staff.
3. Encourage input from staff into ergonomic problem-solving.
4. Provide appropriate ergonomic furniture and tools.
5. Implement ergonomic improvements.
6. Promote healthy work patterns by incorporating breaks and job rotation for repetitive tasks.
7. Encourage staff to report symptoms early.
8. Send employees for medical treatment immediately.
9. Implement work restriction and job modification.

Remember... Safety Matters.

