

Ergonomics

From construction to office jobs, from healthcare to food processing, workers in a wide spectrum of industries often have responsibilities that could put them at risk for injuries from the overuse of muscles, bad posture and repeated tasks. The following activities can increase your risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), which are one of the leading causes of lost workdays due to illness or injury:

- Force (heavy lifting, pushing, pulling, etc.)
- Repetition of tasks
- Awkward or static postures
- Quick motions
- Compression or contact stress
- Vibration
- Cold temperatures (in combination with other risk factors)

Implementing an ergonomic process can help prevent work-related injuries. Defined as “the scientific study of people at work,” ergonomics helps lessen muscle fatigue, increases productivity and reduces the number and severity of MSDs. Implementing physical changes to the workplace, establishing efficient work practices and procedures and using personal protective equipment can help.

There are many measures that can be taken to design tasks, work spaces and equipment to be more ergonomic. Some examples are:

- Use the adjustments already provided in your chairs, computer monitors and furniture systems, and add ergonomically-designed tools or accessories as needed.
- Adjust the placement of telephones, printers or other items in your workstation that you use frequently.
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- Move around and occasionally change positions.
- Move work surfaces closer to the body and to a comfortable height.

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- When lifting, maintain an upright position and avoid bending and twisting.
- Use equipment and tools that are right for the job.
- Use personal protective equipment, such as thermal gloves to help with cold conditions or padding to reduce contact with hard surfaces.

Musculoskeletal Disorder Examples

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tendinitis
- Rotator cuff injuries (shoulder)
- Epicondylitis (elbow)
- Muscle strains
- Lower back injuries
- Tension neck syndrome

Common Symptoms

- Numbness in your fingers
- Difficulty moving your fingers
- Stiff joints
- Back pain
- Sore neck or shoulders



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