

# Ergonomics: Combining comfort and safety



## Fitting the job environment to you

You should never have to feel like you need to work through pain to get your job done. Following the principles of ergonomics - the science of designing a safe and efficient job environment to work in - you can reduce stress and eliminate injuries associated with poor posture, overexertion and repeated tasks. Whether you're lifting boxes in a warehouse, placing items in an assembly line or typing on a computer, ergonomic safety is important to everyone.

If gone undetected, ergonomics issues can lead to serious muscle and joint concerns. If you are experiencing pain, swelling or numbness, be sure to pay attention to the following risk factors on the job:

- Improper workstation setup
- Overexertion while lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, reaching or stretching
- Repetitive motions
- Working in awkward positions
- Sitting or standing too long in one position
- Using excessive force

Fortunately, ergonomic issues can be prevented and improved with early intervention. Here are some simple tips you can follow to avoid discomfort:

- Take frequent breaks - get up and stretch, walk around or change your scenery
- Vary the workday - if possible, try to space out different types of tasks
- Report pain or discomfort immediately - don't wait until it becomes serious, always inform your supervisor
- If you are a supervisor, be sure to monitor your employees and make sure they are taking necessary breaks

## Bring it home

While ergonomics is most commonly thought of as a workplace safety concern, ergonomic injuries can also result from activities at home and in communities like playing video games, cooking, sewing or home repair. They can also impact your ability to engage in hobbies you enjoy off the job with your family and friends.

Bring your ergonomic safety knowledge home with you:

- Carry a backpack, purse or laptop case that distributes weight evenly with multiple compartments; if your bag has only one strap, rotate which shoulder you carry it on
- Watch your posture at night - one-third of the day is spent in bed; make sure your mattress and pillows support good sleeping postures
- Look for ergonomically designed tools - kitchen knives, gardening shovels, rakes - that have grooved handles for your hands

Don't let an ergonomic injury prevent you from doing what you love. Keep these tips in mind for safe work and play.

## Fast Stat:

Overexertion is the third leading cause of unintentional injuries in the United States, accounting for about 3.2 million emergency department visits. (Injuryfacts.nsc.org)

Your eyes need a break, too. Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

