



BEYOND THE WRIST PADS: ERGONOMICS IS EVERYONE'S CONCERN

When most people hear the word ergonomics, they often think of an office environment and equipment, but ergonomics is much more than chairs, computers and keyboards with wrist pads. Ergonomics is the science of fitting the job to the worker and carries an important role in worker safety and musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) prevention.



EIGHT MSD PREVENTION TIPS:

- If possible, lower rather than lift
- Always use the proper lifting technique
- Push rather than pull
- Push or pull rather than carry
- Work within the 'power zone'
- Avoid awkward postures
- Build adjustability in the job
- Consult with supervision when in doubt

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT MSDS

This is a topic genuinely relevant for every workplace, as workers spend hours and hours every week doing repetitive tasks and duties. As an employee, you want to know what MSD is, how it is caused, and what preventative measures you can take.

MSD are injuries and disorders of the musculoskeletal system. They may be caused or aggravated by various hazards or risk factors in the workplace such as high force, awkward/static postures, and repetitive motions. The musculoskeletal system includes: muscles, tendons and tendon sheaths, nerves, bursa, blood vessels, joints/spinal discs, and ligaments.

MSD do not include musculoskeletal injuries or disorders that are the direct result of a fall, struck by or against, caught in or on, vehicle collision, violence, etc.

EIGHT MSD PREVENTION TIPS (THAT ARE NOT ABOUT YOUR DESKTOP)

1. IF POSSIBLE, LOWER RATHER THAN LIFT

Lowering loads from a higher to a lower level uses gravity as an advantage. This may help to reduce the stresses placed on the body.

2. ALWAYS USE THE PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUE

Often, safe lifting training involves teaching the standard 'Bend at your Knees' technique. While this technique is effective for many lifting situations, other situations may require a 'Golfer's Lift' or a 'Two-Person Lift'. Ensure everyone is trained in the appropriate techniques and when to use them.

3. PUSH RATHER THAN PULL

Pushing provides a mechanical advantage since an individual's body weight helps to move the object. Pushing also allows for better body positioning, reducing stresses on the musculoskeletal system.

4. PUSH OR PULL RATHER THAN CARRY

Using a cart to push or pull a load reduces the stresses placed on the musculoskeletal system from carrying.

5. WORK WITHIN THE 'POWER ZONE'

The 'power zone' is typically considered the area between the shoulders and the knees. Doing work within this area maximizes the body's strength. Heavier objects should be stored in this area so that the body can more effectively handle them. Lighter objects may be able to be stored outside of the power zone.

6. AVOID AWKWARD POSTURES

Joints are strongest and in their most stable position when they are in a neutral position. Work should be designed so that most of it is done with neutral postures. Awkward posture, such as working over the shoulder, increases the risk for MSD.

7. BUILD ADJUSTABILITY IN THE JOB

Having adjustability in the job allows every person to do the work in their most effective posture. It helps to ensure everyone can do work within their power zone, and helps to avoid awkward postures. It also has the advantage of allowing many different people to safely do the same job!

8. ASSESS YOUR WORKSTATION AND CONSULT WITH A SUPERVISOR WHEN IN DOUBT

If a certain task or work arrangement is a cause for concern, or you feel strain in your body at the end of the day but it disappears over the weekend, it is important to bring that to the attention of the supervisor. When unsure, ask. There are resources and educational tools available to help you and your employer improve work environment.

Occupational injuries to muscles, nerves and tendons may not be life-ending, but they can certainly be life-altering. Chronic pain, limitations of physical abilities, and constant discomfort can lead to irritability, poor quality of life, and even depression. Create a safer workplace, and take advantage of these easily accessible resources to reduce MSD risk factors and help prevent workplace injuries.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [PSHSA](#) offers a wide range of services, products and training to help employers create a healthy and safe workplace free from the risk of MSD.
- Ministry of Labour provides [resources](#) for different work settings on ergonomics and injury prevention.

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