

SAFETY MATTERS



LIFTING AND STRETCHING – AVOIDING STRAINS

INTRODUCTION

What is ergonomics and how does it impact us? Ergonomics is the study of the relationship between people, their work and their workplace. The primary goal of ergonomics is to help the body move in natural ways and reduce stressors that might cause damage or injury.

COMMON MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are injuries and disorders of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage and spinal discs. The symptoms of MSDs can include a dull aching sensation, discomfort with specific movements, tenderness to the touch, a burning sensation, pain, tingling, cramping or stiffness. Symptoms often appear gradually and may disappear during rest. **The most common problems occur in a person's neck, low back, shoulders, elbows, wrists and hands.**

PRIMARY RISK FACTORS

Being aware of your motions and movements that might cause problems is the first step to avoid doing something that may develop into an MSD. The four primary risk factors for MSDs include:

- Awkward or uncomfortable postures
- Using excessive force
- Repetitive motion
- Contact stress

Obviously, all these risk factors are amplified by how we lift and how we move our bodies. **When we have a good understanding of how to avoid these risk factors, we can help avoid MSDs.**



MAINTAINING FLEXIBILITY

One of the contributing factors to strains is when your body moves in ways it is not prepared to, or uses muscle groups that haven't been warmed up for the task. **Practicing some basic stretching exercises to prepare your body for work can help prevent strains or other serious injuries.**

Simple stretching exercises for your hands, wrists, back and neck can help to avoid problems during the day. Hands and wrists should be stretched so they are ready to move in typical ways required at work. Your neck can be stretched gently from side to side and then from front to back. Your back can be stretched while sitting in a chair and bending so your chin gets close to your knees.

LIFTING TECHNIQUES

How you lift and use your back muscles will determine if you are experiencing pain and troubles that can be avoided. Improper lifting will result in strains and pain. By following these lifting tips, you can avoid being hurt and having pain. No one can force you to lift the right way; you have to decide to use proper techniques every time you lift.