

TOOLBOX TALK

Ergonomics: Office & Industrial

WHY THIS MATTERS

1.8 million workers report musculoskeletal disorders every year (OSHA). MSDs account for 30% of all lost-workday cases (BLS) and cost \$20 billion+ annually in workers' comp alone. Carpal tunnel syndrome takes 25 days off work — the longest of ANY injury type (BLS).

1.8M

Workers with MSDs per year (OSHA)

30%

Of lost-workday cases are MSDs (BLS)

100%

Ergonomic injuries are preventable with good design

5 Rules to Prevent Ergonomic Injuries

MSDs develop slowly — by the time you feel pain, the damage is already happening:

1

MAINTAIN NEUTRAL POSTURES

Keep wrists straight, elbows at 90°, back supported, shoulders relaxed. Avoid bending, twisting, or reaching.

2

TAKE MICRO-BREAKS EVERY 30-60 MINUTES

Stand, stretch, and move for 1-2 minutes. Static postures — sitting OR standing — cause cumulative damage.

3

SET UP YOUR WORKSTATION CORRECTLY

Monitor at eye level, keyboard at elbow height, feet flat on floor. Industrial: adjust work surface height to task.

4

USE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB — AND THE RIGHT SIZE

Oversized grips, vibrating tools, and awkward handles increase strain. Use ergonomic tools and power assists.

5

REPORT EARLY SYMPTOMS IMMEDIATELY

Tingling, numbness, aching, or stiffness in hands, wrists, neck, or back — report early. Early treatment prevents surgery.

Ergonomic Self-Assessment Checklist

- Are your wrists in a neutral (straight) position when typing or gripping tools?
- Is your monitor at eye level and about arm's length away?
- Are you taking stretch breaks at least every 60 minutes?
- Can you reach your most-used items without twisting or overreaching?
- Are you experiencing any tingling, numbness, or persistent pain?

Common Ergonomic Injuries — Know the Warning Signs

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

Tingling, numbness, weakness in fingers/hand. From repetitive wrist motions. 32.5% of all RSIs (BLS). 25 days off.

Tendinitis

Pain and inflammation in tendons — wrists, elbows, shoulders. From repetitive forceful motions without rest.

Low Back Pain / Strain

#1 MSD complaint. From lifting, bending, twisting, prolonged sitting, or poor posture. Use proper lift technique.

Rotator Cuff Injury

Shoulder pain from repeated overhead reaching or lifting. Avoid sustained work above shoulder height.

Trigger Finger

Finger locks in bent position from repetitive gripping. Common with hand tools and power tools.

Neck / Shoulder Tension

From looking down at screens, hunching, or cradling a phone. Set monitor at eye level. Use a headset.

Common Ergonomic Mistakes That Cause Chronic Injuries

- ✗ "It's just a little stiffness" — ignoring early warning signs. By the time pain is constant, damage is done
- ✗ Working through pain without reporting — early intervention can prevent surgery and permanent disability
- ✗ Never adjusting your workstation — one size does NOT fit all. Adjust chair, desk, monitor, and tools to YOUR body
- ✗ Skipping stretch breaks — 8 hours of static posture causes cumulative damage. Move every 30-60 minutes

Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ The 20-20-20 rule for screens: every 20 min, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds to reduce eye strain
- ✓ For every \$1 spent on ergonomic improvements, companies get \$17.80 back — prevention is cheaper than treatment
- ✓ Lift with your legs, not your back — bend knees, keep load close, never twist while lifting
- ✓ Wrist splints at night can prevent CTS from progressing — if you wake with numb hands, see a doctor now

Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Is anyone experiencing tingling, numbness, or recurring pain in hands, wrists, or back?
2. Are our workstations properly set up for each individual worker?
3. Are we taking regular stretch breaks during our shift?
4. What repetitive tasks do we perform that could cause strain over time?
5. What ergonomic improvements could we make to our work area today?

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: _____ Supervisor: _____

Project: _____ Location: _____

Attendance sheet attached: Yes