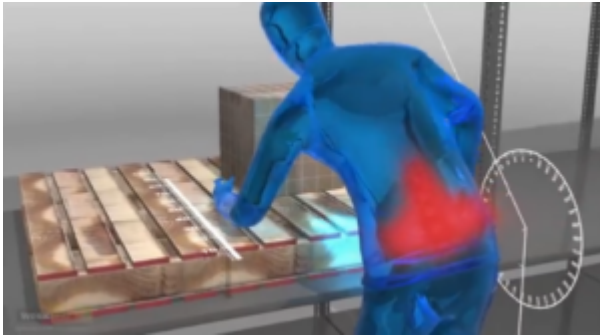


Workers Can Take 3 Steps to Help Address Ergonomics-Related Hazards



Workers can be very helpful when it comes to identifying safety hazards in the workplace. They can be particularly helpful in identifying ergonomics-related hazards, which aren't always as obvious as, say, trip and fall hazards or pinch points in machinery.

Given that October is Occupational or Global Ergonomics Month, it's a good time to educate your workers on how to identify hazards that could lead to the development of musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs).

WorkSafeBC released a useful guide, *Understanding the Risks of Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI): An educational guide for workers on strains, sprains and other MSIs*. This guide recommends that you tell workers to take the following three steps:

Step #1: Think about your job and all the different duties. For each duty, try to identify which, if any, of these four physical risk factors'force, repetition, work posture and local contact stress'are present. Particularly think about whether these factors affect the same body part. Then consider these questions:

- Does the total time (duration) you spend doing a particular duty increase the physical demands on your body'
- Do any of the following increase the physical demands on your body'
 - Layout of your workplace or workstation (such as work surfaces that are too high or too low or that result in excessive reaching or bending distances)
 - Characteristics of the objects you handle (such as objects that are too large to handle or that have their weight unevenly distributed)
 - Environmental conditions (such as an atmosphere or objects cold enough to make your hands cold while you handle them)
 - Organization of your work duties (such as a lack of variety of tasks, with the result that your muscles don't have a chance to rest and recover).

Step #2: After you answer these questions, you'll have a fairly good idea of what risk factors you're exposed to in your work. You can probably see which duties place you at the most risk of MSI and where changes are most needed. Discuss any suggestions you have for practical solutions to reduce or eliminate

some of these risk factors with your supervisor and/or members of the JHSC.

Step #3: If you have any work-related injuries or are experiencing the signs or symptoms of an MSI, report it without delay so the employer may investigate and determine the risk factors that contributed to the injury or condition. Only then will the employer be able to implement adequate controls to eliminate or minimize the risk factors.

For more ergonomics-related resources, go to the OHS Insider's Ergonomics Compliance Centre for articles, tools, videos and other resources on topics such as proper posture, lifting and pushing and pulling.