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The Occupational
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Ergonomics and Cumulative Trauma Injuries: The Basics

OSHA

- Was created by the US Congress in 1979
- Works to ensure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women
- Sets and enforces standards
- Provides training, outreach, education and assistance

Under OSHA, workers have the right to:

- A safe and healthful workplace
- Know about hazardous chemicals
- Information about injuries and illnesses in the workplace
- Request hazard correction from employer
- Training
- Hazard exposure and medical records
- File a complaint with OSHA
- Participate in an OSHA inspection
- Be free from retaliation for exercising safety and health rights



Housekeeper Managers: Improving Housekeeping Work using Ergonomics



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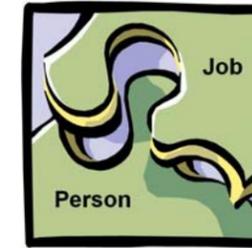
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Ergonomics

“ The science of designing jobs, equipment, and workplaces to fit the person ”

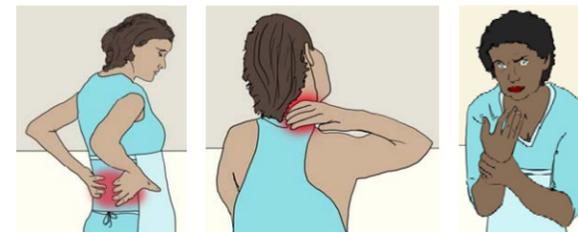


- Ergonomics principles are all around us, both at work and at home
- This pamphlet shows how ergonomics can be applied to housekeeping work

Benefits of Ergonomics:

- Improves **efficiency** of housekeeping work
- Increases work **quality**
- Reduces discomfort or pain in housekeepers
- Lowers housekeeper injury risk
- Allows housekeepers to work more easily

Cumulative Trauma Injuries develop over a period of weeks, months, or years and can result in back, wrist, shoulder, and neck pain



Overexertion can irritate the body's muscles and tendons, but tendons take much longer to heal

Some housekeeping tasks can put a lot of **pressure on the discs in the back**, which are the “shock absorbers” between vertebrae



Examples



Lifting or pushing heavy objects

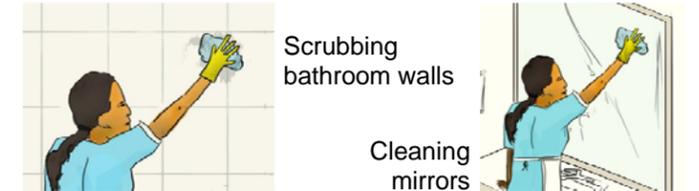
Twisting (e.g., to clean tubs)

Bending at the waist

Some housekeeping tasks can cause **pain in the neck and shoulders** (e.g., irritated, swollen, or torn tendons)

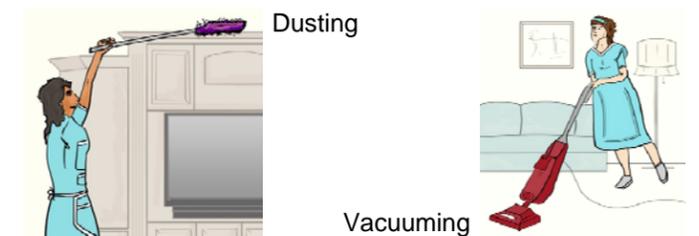


Examples



Scrubbing bathroom walls

Cleaning mirrors



Dusting

Vacuuming

Symptoms of Possible Cumulative Trauma Injury:

- Chronic, nagging pain or tenderness
- Muscle weakness
- Fatigue
- Joint stiffness or reduced flexibility
- Numbness in hands



Injury Risk Factors Among Housekeepers:

- **Forceful exertions** (e.g., lifting heavy mattresses, pushing heavy supply carts, using vacuum cleaners)
- **Similar work postures** for long periods (e.g., standing, kneeling)
- **Awkward postures** (e.g., cleaning bathroom floors or bathtubs)
- **No muscle rest** while working (e.g., doing many tasks using the same hand or arm)
- **Repetitive activities** (e.g., putting on pillowcases, cleaning mirrors, vacuuming)



Making Housekeeping Work Easier

The Work System

The Housekeeping "System"

Components that impact safety and efficiency:



Work Environment

Examples: number of beds in room; high-end or budget hotel

Tools and Equipment

Examples: style and condition of vacuum; length of brush handles

Employee

Examples: size and physical condition; attitude towards job

Job Task

Examples: cleaning walk-in shower vs. tub; floor-mopping method

Successful Work Systems

- **Management** must:
 - Be committed to improving the system
 - Provide resources for success to occur
- **Supervisors** must:
 - Empower employees to take part in identifying problems and finding solutions
 - Be proactive in seeking positive changes
- **Employees** must:
 - Understand basics of injury risks & symptoms
 - Take responsibility for their own health and safety

Consider Team Cleaning

- Housekeepers work together to do job
- Can benefit the *employee* — examples:
 - Reduces isolated work; builds social support
 - Improves employees' occupational and communication skills
 - Empowers workers and increases morale
- Can benefit the *employer* — examples:
 - Increases retention, work quality and productivity
 - Reduces labor and equipment costs, supervisor's quality-check time, employee's temptation to steal



Room Design

- Consider how room features make housekeeping easier or more difficult

Alternative Work Methods

Bed-Making Postures:

- Encourage use of less-awkward postures when lifting mattresses or tucking sheets



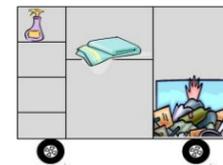
Vacuum Use:

- Align with body
- Alternate hands
- Proper height setting
- Empty bag frequently



Supply Carts:

- Keep most items between hips and chest
- Move using both hands
- Align wheels before movement
- Empty trash frequently
- Replenish cart more often
- Report cart problems to supervisor



Cleaning Bathrooms:

- Stand inside tub, if allowed (stand on rag)
- Keep dirty towels off floor
- Do work at waist level as often as possible
- Do not carry large or heavy weights; make more trips if possible
- Alternate arms when cleaning surfaces



Products to Consider

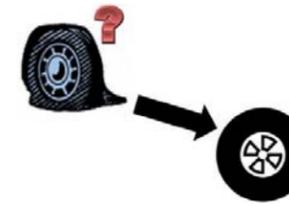
For Beds:

- Fitted sheets instead of flat sheets
- Bed-making tools



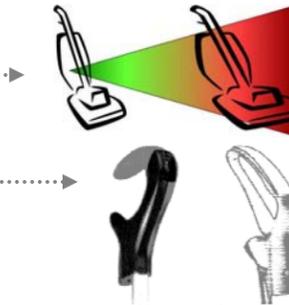
For Supply Carts:

- Larger, harder wheels
- Replace worn wheels
- Motorized carts



For Vacuuming:

- Lighter-weight
- Self-propelled or brush-assist
- "Ergonomic" handles
- Alternatives to uprights (e.g., canisters, backpacks)



For Bathrooms:

- Long-handled brushes and scrubbers
- Brushes and sprayers with more-comfortable grips



For Dusting:

- Micro-fiber products
- Extended handles



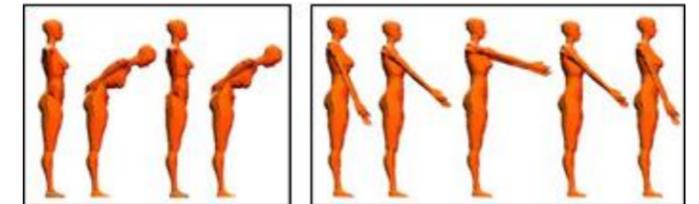
Housekeeper Health

Encourage Housekeepers To:

- Wear comfortable shoes at work



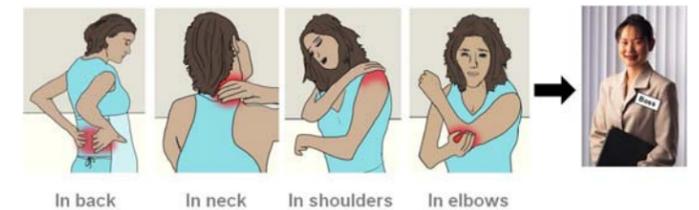
- "Warm-up" their bodies before starting work



Back

Arms and Shoulders

- Report any unusual aches or pains



- Communicate ways they have found to make the job easier



- Improve their well-being (e.g., balanced diet, regular exercise, plenty of sleep)

