

OFFICE SAFETY (8/2015)

Overview (Slide 1)

Surprisingly, the office work place can be a dangerous place. Every year, about six million people get hurt at work. The dangers are hidden and subtle. You have to be on your guard every minute, and ready to take action -- before you get hurt.

In this training session, we'll look at the way you work at your workstation to see if you're doing all you can to prevent injuries. Then, we'll check out what you can do to stay comfortable and secure at work, how you can avoid things like stress, theft, and violence.

YOUR WORKSTATION (Slide 2)

Since you spend most of your time at your workstation, that's where you're most likely to get hurt. If you work full-time, you spend seventeen to nineteen hundred hours a year in your work area. One of the most common injuries among office workers is a musculoskeletal disorder. It comes from straining your body beyond safe limits or doing the same thing over and over without giving your body time to rest.

(Slide 3) Musculoskeletal disorders begin with physical stress -- on your muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, joints, or spinal discs.

(Slide 4) The most common causes of physical stress are awkward postures, repetitive motion, lifting, contact stress, extreme force, and vibration. So, the way to prevent musculoskeletal disorders is to ensure your work does not have these stressors.

Example - Typical Workstation: Many workers hunch over their keyboard with their shoulders and head tilted upward. This is an awkward posture. Placing an elbow on the desk causes contact stress. Using a mouse that's way out in front and she's resting the heel of the hand on the desktop is also contact stress. Where the papers you refer to on the desk is also important. You should not have to keep turning your head back and forth between them and the screen. This is repetitive motion. Phone location means where it is and how far you have to reach to answer it; and holding the phone between your shoulder and neck for long periods of time causes contact stress and awkward posture.

(Slide 5) Some jobs, like in a mail or shipping room, require bending down and back up over and over, for all day. How heavy and how big the packages being lifted add stress, of course, but so does bending from the waist, holds the box way out from your body, and then twisting your back instead of moving your feet when turning to put it down; that's awkward posture.

(Slide 6) The good thing about musculoskeletal injuries is you can prevent them if you use your body properly. Avoid awkward postures and positions. Arrange your work and your workstation so you keep your muscles relaxed and in a neutral position as much as possible.

(Slide 7) Move the work to you, instead of moving your body to the work. You should try to perform your most common tasks close to your body and near waist level. Don't keep commonly used items on high shelves or in low cabinets.

(Slide 8) On your work surface, place the things you use most often within easy reach. This helps you avoid long reaches that take far more force than work done near your body.

(Slide 9) If you use a keyboard, the best position is with your arms hanging comfortably from your shoulders and close to your sides. Bend your arms at a right angle at your elbows. Keep your hands in a straight line with your forearms so you don't bend your wrists. Your keyboard tray should be long enough to allow you to use your mouse on it. Place your documents in a holder.

(Slide 10) If your workstation has a video display terminal, the top of the screen should be at or just below eye level when you're sitting up straight. This way you don't have to tilt your head at an awkward angle. If glare is keeping you from seeing well, you may need to close blinds or change lighting. Your office area should be about as bright as your monitor screen.

(Slide 11) Adjust your chair so it's comfortable for you instead of "hunching over." You should be able to reach your work without leaning forward or pulling your shoulders up. Make sure your lower back is supported. Select the right size lumbar cushion to help keep your back's natural curve. Set the seat height to keep your thighs parallel to the floor and your feet flat on the floor. Use a footrest if you can't lower your workstation.

(Slide 12) Everyone should be aware of how to make a proper lift. Good lifting techniques protect your back muscles from stress and injuries. For starters, arrange your work area so you don't have to bend over as much.

(Slide 13) To lift properly, stand close to the load, one foot slightly ahead of the other keeping both feet flat his knees bent slightly. Bend at the hips a little to hold your spine in neutral. Keeping the load close to your body and use your feet and legs to turn instead of twisting your back. Move in one slow movement -- no jerky movement! To set the load down, reverse the procedure.

(Slide 14) Proper lifting is crucial to protecting your back but so is knowing when not to lift. Don't lift a load that's too heavy. Get someone to help you. Don't try to move furniture or file cabinets. It takes special training and equipment to deal with heavy loads. If you don't do it right, your back could punish you for the rest of your life!

(Slide 15) Another big way to protect yourself is to take regular breaks to relieve muscle stress. Set a timer if you get too absorbed in your work to remember. Anytime your muscles tighten up, or if you feel stiff, take a quick break. Stretch and move the tight muscles into the opposite position. Drop your shoulders down and back. Take a few deep belly breaths. If you're doing close work, look at something far away. Remember, even your eye muscles get tired when they focus at one distance for a long time.

(Slide 16) Adjusting your work area can be difficult. Often it helps to ask a coworker to watch how you sit and work to spot bad habits of which you might not be aware. If possible, vary your tasks to give your muscles a break by switching between sitting, standing, and walking tasks.

Slips, Trips and Falls

(Slide 17) One of the hidden dangers in an office area are slips, trips and falls. If you fall, you could break a leg, hurt your back, or suffer a head injury. Every year, nearly half a million people are injured when they slip, trip, or fall at work. A few of these injuries are caused by unsafe conditions, but most result from unsafe actions or poor housekeeping. Most slips happen when people lose traction on a wet or oily surface. So clean up spills immediately, and barricade wet areas until they dry.

(Slide 18) Most trips happen when feet encounter something that shouldn't be on the floor. Your best defense is to keep pathways and work areas clean and free of clutter, including purses, briefcases, and trash containers. Also learn to be on the lookout for loose rugs, uneven flooring and, snaking extension cords or cables.

(Slide 19) Many falls happen when people use ladders improperly or use makeshift climbing devices. Never use boxes, shelves, or chairs to reach a load. Get a step stool or ladder for anything above shoulder level. And be sure to inspect it before you use it.

(Slide 20) There are lots of other objects in the office that can hurt you. Look around and spot the dangers where you work. Then, do something about them. Close file drawers and desk pull outs when you're not using them. Most tip overs occur when more than one file drawer is pulled out at the same time. Keep hair and loose clothing away from office machines. And watch out for paper cutters and other sharp tools.

STRESS

(Slide 21) We all know what stress feels like. Our work can cause stress and we also know stress affects our work and our behavior. The big question is what to do about it. Although everyone is different, some general rules can help you deal with stress. Get organized. Keep a list of the tasks ahead along with when they are due. As you finish assigned tasks, check them off, and don't think about upcoming tasks until you get to them.

(Slide 22) Take breaks. Stretch and change your position regularly. Learn to take deep belly breaths and relax your muscles throughout your body. This increases your circulation and your sense of wellbeing. Find time after work to exercise or play a sport. Balance your work and family life. Leave work worries at work. Make time to have fun and laugh. Try to keep a relaxed and positive outlook. When you worry, ask yourself if the issue is really that important. When you think negative thoughts, replace them with positive ones.

(Slide 23) Be aware of behavioral changes in fellow employees. When someone who's usually talkative becomes quiet or the reverse, it could be a sign of trouble brewing. Depression, angry outbursts, and threats should be taken seriously and reported immediately. Quick action can assure that a troubled coworker gets help. Never confront anyone who is behaving in an angry or threatening manner. Stay calm and speak softly and reassuringly as you leave the area. Trust your instincts. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, go to a safe location and immediately report your observations.

(Slide 24) When disputes or problems arise with people, address the problem or behavior, not the person. Try to take personality out of the picture, if possible.

(Slide 25) Personal security is also a concern when it involves theft or arriving or departing the workplace outside of normal office hours. You should lock up your valuables or carry them with you at all times. Mark personal items with your name or initials. Report suspicious activities or situations. These could include doors that don't lock properly, broken windows, or unusual phone calls. Report conditions that are safety hazards -- like burned out light bulbs and dark corridors or stairways. Think safety. If possible, work in pairs. Use a buddy system when you go to restrooms, stairways, and parking lots. Park in well lit areas. Don't go into an elevator or other secluded area with someone who looks out of place or is behaving strangely.

It's important for your employer to analyze the hazards you face and develop plans to deal with these hazards. You'll learn what you should do if you spot a hazard or if an emergency occurs.

(Slide 26) Other emergencies can occur in the workplace. What to do in case of a fire, severe weather, intruders or suspicious packages will be covered in another session.

Your office place may also have dangerous chemical products so you will also learn in another session about what those chemicals are and how to protect yourself.

OFFICE SAFETY

(Slide 1)

Overview

- 6 million employees are hurt every year in the office
- Workstation
- Stress
- Workplace violence

(Slide 2)

Musculoskeletal Disorder

- Most common among people working in offices
- Caused by
 - Straining the body beyond its safe limits
 - Doing the same task repeatedly without resting

(Slide 3)

Musculoskeletal Disorder

Begins with physical stress on

- Muscles
- Nerves
- Tendons
- Ligaments
- Cartilage
- Joints or spinal discs

(Slide 4)

Musculoskeletal Disorder

Causes

- Awkward postures
- Repetitive motion
- Lifting
- Contact stress
- Extreme force

- Vibration

Prevention

- Change the way you work and remove the stress

(Slide 5)

Improper Lifting

- Bending from the waist
- Holding the item away from the body
- Twisting the back instead of moving the feet while turning

(Slide 6)

Prevention - Workstation

- Avoid awkward postures and positions
- Proper arrangement of your workstation
- Obtain a relaxed and neutral body position

(Slide 7)

Prevention - Workstation

- Move the work toward you, instead of moving the body toward the work
- Try performing tasks close to the body and near waist level
- Avoid keeping commonly used items on high shelves or in low cabinets

(Slide 8)

Prevention - Workstation

- Keep things used often within easy reach
- Avoid long reaches that take more force than work done near the body

(Slide 9)

Prevention - Workstation (Keyboard)

If you use a keyboard:

- Arms should hang comfortably from shoulders and close to your sides
- Bend the arms at right angle at your elbows
- Keep the hands in a straight line with forearms, to avoid bending the wrists
- Keyboard tray should be long enough to use the mouse on it
- Use a document holder

(Slide 10)

Prevention - Workstation (VDT)

- The top of the screen should be at or just below eye level
- To avoid tilting your head at an awkward angle
- Avoid glare by
 - Closing blinds
 - Changing lighting
- The office area should be about as bright as your monitor screen

(Slide 11)

Prevention - Workstation (Chair)

- Adjust your chair to be seated comfortably (not hunched over)
- Reach your work without leaning forward or pulling your shoulders up
- Make sure the lower back is supported
 - Lumbar cushion helps to keep your back's natural curve
- Adjust the seat to proper height
 - Keep your thighs parallel to the floor and feet flat on the floor
- Use a footrest if you can't lower your workstation

(Slide 12)

Proper Lifting

- Arrange your work area to avoid bending over
- Be aware of proper lifting techniques
 - Lifting properly protects back muscles from stress and injuries

(Slide 13)

Proper Lifting

- Stand close to the load
- Keep one foot slightly ahead of the other
- Keep both feet flat on the floor
- Bend your knees slightly
- Bend the hips slightly
- Hold the spine in neutral position
- Keep the load close to the body
- Use feet and legs to turn, instead of twisting the back
- Reverse the procedure to set the load down

(Slide 14)

Proper Lifting

- Don't lift loads that are too heavy
- Don't try to move furniture or file cabinets
- It takes special training and equipment to deal with heavy loads

(Slide 15)

Stress

- Take a quick break if your muscles tighten up, or if you feel stiff
- Stretch and move the tight muscles into the opposite position
- Drop your shoulders down and back
- Take a few deep breaths
- If you're doing close work, look at something far away
 - Eye muscles get tired when you focus on one distance for a long time

(Slide 16)

- Get co-worker to observe you work to highlight your bad ergonomic work habits
- Change your routine between sitting, standing and walking

(Slide 17)

Slips

- Happen when people lose traction on a wet or oily surface
- Clean up spills immediately and barricade wet areas until they dry

(Slide 18)

Trips

- Happen when your feet encounter something on the floor
- Can be avoided by keeping pathways and work areas clean and free of clutter
- Lookout for
 - Loose rugs
 - Uneven flooring
 - Extension cords or cables

(Slide 19)

Falls

- Using Ladders improperly
- Makeshift climbing devices
 - Never use boxes, shelves, or chairs to reach a load
 - Get a step stool or ladder to reach anything above shoulder level
 - Be sure to inspect before use

(Slide 20)

Hidden Dangers

- There are lots of objects in the office that can hurt you
- Look around and spot the dangers
- Close file drawers and desk pull outs when they are not being used
 - Do not pull more than one file drawer out at the same time
- Keep hair and loose clothing away from office machines
- Watch out for paper cutters and other sharp tools

(Slide 21)

General Rules - Get organized

- Keep a list of the tasks ahead along with when they are due
- As you finish assigned tasks, check them off
- Don't think about the tasks ahead until you get to them

(Slide 22)

General Rules - Take breaks

- Stretch and change position regularly
- Take deep breaths and relax the muscles throughout the body
 - This increases circulation and sense of wellbeing
- Find time after work to exercise or play a sport
- Balance work and family life
- Make time to have fun and laugh
- Keep a relaxed and positive outlook
 - Ask yourself if your reason for worry is really that important
 - Replace negative thoughts with positive ones

(Slide 23)

Behavioral Problems

- Observe any behavioral changes in fellow employees that could signify serious problems
- Report depression, angry outbursts, and threats immediately
 - Quick action assures help for a troubled coworker
- If a person is behaving in an angry or threatening manner
 - Stay calm
 - Speak softly and reassuringly as you leave the area
 - Trust your instincts
 - In an uncomfortable situation
 - Go to a safe location
 - Immediately report your observations
 - Call your Supervisor
 - Call Bureau of Protective Services 734-2422

(Slide 24)

Resolving the Problem

- Address the problem or behavior, not the person
- Try to take personality out of the picture, if possible

(Slide 25)

Security and Safety

- Lock up or carry your valuables
- Mark personal items
- Report suspicious activities or situations like
 - Doors that don't lock properly
 - Broken windows
 - Unusual phone calls
- Report conditions that are safety hazards like
 - Burned out light bulbs
 - Dark corridors or stairways
- Use buddy system
- Park in well lit areas

- Avoid going into elevator or secluded area with someone who looks out of place or is behaving strangely

(Slide 26)

Other Sessions

- Fire Prevention and Emergency Action Plan
- Hazard Communications – Your Right to Know About Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace

COMPREHENSIVE TEST – OFFICE SAFETY

NAME: _____

Date: _____

Select the choice that best answers each of the following questions.

1. (True or False?) Hazards exist in every workplace, even in an office environment.
 - A. True
 - B. False

2. (True or False?) A musculoskeletal disorder is an injury to your muscles, tendons, joints or spinal discs.
 - A. True
 - B. False

3. Which of the following is NOT a cause for a musculoskeletal disorder?
 - A. Awkward position
 - B. Slip, trip or fall
 - C. Contact Stress
 - D. Repetitive motion

4. Which of the following is NOT a correct way to make a lift?
 - A. Determine if the item is too heavy before lifting
 - B. Bend and lift with your knees
 - C. Hold the item close to your body
 - D. Twist to turn

5. Which of the following is a proper way to arrange your workstation?
 - A. Place frequently needed materials and your phone close so as not having to reach far
 - B. Place your documents on your desktop to the left of the computer screen
 - C. While typing, rest you wrists on the edge of your desktop to help prevent fatigue
 - D. Adjust your chair height so that the toes of your feet barely touch the floor

6. What is a way to relieve work stress?
 - A. Take frequent regular breaks
 - B. Do stretching exercises or get up and walk around
 - C. If working on a computer, focus on something far away
 - D. All of the above

7. Which of the following is a trip hazard that could lead to a fall?
 - A. Water or oil on the walk surface
 - B. Standing on a chair (to reach the top shelf of a bookshelf)
 - C. Placing a power surge protector cord across a walk way
 - D. Standing on a step stool (to place an item on a storage rack)

8. Which of the following is a way to prevent a slip, trip and fall?
 - A. Clean up spills immediately
 - B. Close file cabinet drawers when not in use
 - C. Keep walkways and work areas clean and free from clutter
 - D. All of the above

9. What should you NOT do when you have to deal with a disgruntled employee or customer who is behaving in a threatening manner?
 - A. Stay calm, speak softly and try to address their problem
 - B. Quickly confront the person
 - C. Report the situation to your supervisor and/or security
 - D. Go to a safe location

10. Which of the following is a way to ensure your personal protection?
 - A. Report suspicious activities, someone who looks out of place, strange behavior and unusual phone calls to security
 - B. Avoid going to secluded areas (elevators, parking lots) by yourself after hours and report burned out light bulbs in corridors, on stairways and in parking lots
 - C. Lock up your valuables out of sight or carry them on your person
 - D. All of the above

COMPREHENSIVE TEST – OFFICE SAFETY: ANSWERS

1. A
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. A
6. D
7. C
8. D
9. B
10. D