

Monday Special: Protecting Your Staff From Ergonomic Disorders

☒ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Ergonomic disorders including CTS (carpal tunnel syndrome), various tendon disorders and lower back injuries, are the most rapidly growing category of OSHA recordable injuries and illnesses.”

According to the site **Ergonomics in Healthcare**

*Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) account for \$1 of every \$3 spent on Workers Compensation in America and affect 1.8 million workers each year which many experts believe represents significant under-reporting of the true incidence of ergonomic injury nationally. Compared to other private industry sectors, the medical, economic, and social costs of work-related musculoskeletal disorders or ergonomic injuries in the **healthcare environment** are particularly serious and warrant special consideration.*

To protect your most valuable resource, your employees, follow these guidelines and use the links below:

1. Have an ergonomic specialist speak at staff meetings annually to educate your employees on ergonomically sound work habits.
2. As a part of orientation, give new employees verbal and written instruction on arranging their workstations so they can be comfortable and safe.
3. When an employee asks for a new chair, an ergonomic keyboard or a higher or lower desk, arrange for a professional ergonomic assessment (most physical therapy groups can provide this) to ensure the needs of the employee are correctly met. Ergonomic assessments for

all employees is ideal, but not always possible.

4. If staff are physically assisting patients or lifting them at all, institute a lift program and make sure you have the correct equipment to protect the staff against lifting injuries. Some private medical practices have a zero-lift policy, which means staff do not lift patients for any reason. Typically, family members and caregivers assist and lift patients in the practice setting.
5. Consider wired headsets or wireless headsets instead of handsets for natural neck positioning when talking on the phone.
6. Always document all efforts to provide your staff with a safe and comfortable workplace.

Workstation Set-up – online tutorial to setting up workstations (takes 30-45 minutes)

Posture Tips – excellent text and diagrams from ErgoSum Consulting on posture tips for sitting, standing, arms and hands, necks and shoulders, and much more

Ergonomics in Healthcare – a very rich site (you do have to register to use the tools) that focuses on ergonomics and potential injuries to staff in assisted living, long-term care and hospitals.