



January 29, 2019

Ergonomics... for Food Service Employees

Throughout the day, food service workers perform numerous tasks including baking, prepping and serving food items, washing dishes, cleaning counters, etc., which can place stress on the back shoulders, arms, hands, and wrists and result in a repetitive stress injury (RSI).

Here's a few tips to reduce your risk for a RSI while working in the kitchen:

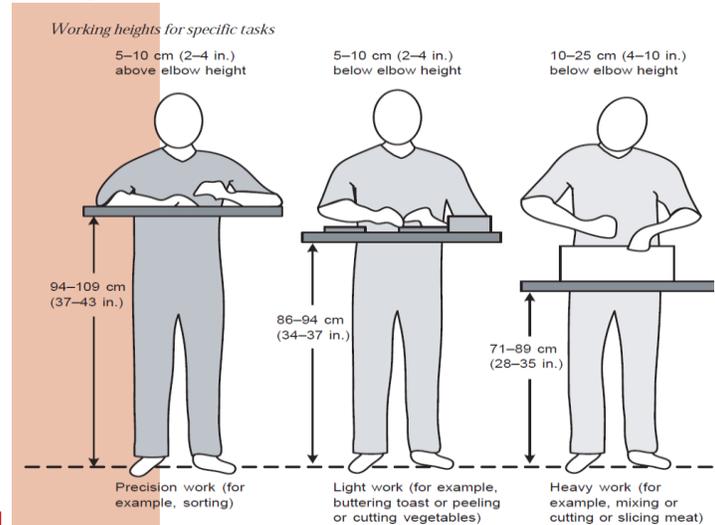
Position Matters:

- ✓ Position work at the proper height to avoid working in an awkward position
 - Too tall? Raise the working surface to a comfortable height by positioning cutting boards underneath pans.
 - Too short? Either stand on a stable step stool or platform, but be careful to make sure it doesn't cause a trip hazard, OR move to a shorter counter or a lower working surface.
- ✓ **Avoid overstretching** – it puts stress your shoulder, arms, and upper back.

Think ERGONOMICS when:

Selecting utensils

- ✓ **Rounded edges and larger diameter handles** reduce the risk of contact stress (use of a power grip; not a pinch grip).
- ✓ Utensils with **larger centers and slimmer ends** are more comfortable to grip when chopping and cutting.
- ✓ Select a knife with an **angled or pistol grip handle when slicing breads** to allow your wrist to maintain a neutral position.
- ✓ **Hand-wash knives** and **store them in a knife rack** to protect the blades. Dull knives require more force to cut.



Source: An Ergonomics Guide for Kitchens in Healthcare (2003), Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare in BC

Work Organization makes a BIG difference

- ✓ **Avoid using the same muscle groups for prolonged periods by varying tasks.** Alternate tasks such as chopping, peeling, cutting, and slicing fruits/vegetables, washing dishes, cleaning countertops, etc.
- ✓ **Stretch regularly...** for a few minutes at the start of the shift and throughout the day to increase blood flow and relieve muscle tension.
- ✓ **Take frequent micro-pauses** to stretch your back and relax your muscles, especially while standing in one position serving meals. Periodically change positions, let your arms hang loosely at your sides, and shake your wrists for 5 – 20 seconds to prevent fatigue.

Lifting/Carrying/Moving Food Items

- ✓ **Always use good body mechanics** handling boxes, large bags, or buckets containing food related items.
- ✓ **Use carts** when moving items around the kitchen.
- ✓ **Load serving containers into the salad bar first; then add ice** instead of lifting heavy trays filled with food and ice.

Organizing storage rooms

- ✓ Store lighter items on the top shelves.
- ✓ Avoid lifting/stacking heavy items above shoulder height whenever possible.

Wear comfortable shoes - Your feet will thank you!

Use anti-fatigue mats whenever possible

They help reduce compression forces and fatigue to the lower legs, feet, and back.

Ergonomics... It's about **WORKING SMARTER, not harder, and staying in your COMFORT ZONE!**

Email safety@ncesd.org to request a free ergonomic assessment with a NCESD Loss Control Specialist.

SAFETY MATTERS