

Musculoskeletal disorders

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are conditions that affect the muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments and other supporting structures of the body. Work-related MSDs are common and can significantly impact a person's well-being and work productivity. If these are not taken care of, they can get worse.

Common types of MSDs include:

- 1) Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- 2) Tendonitis
- 3) Back Pain
- 4) Neck and Shoulder Pain
- 5) Herniated Discs
- 6) Strains or Sprains

There are different types of activities that may cause or contribute to MSD's. These include factors such as repetitive motions or tasks, maintaining awkward postures for extended periods, lifting heavy objects, using excessive force, working in environments with vibrations, and inadequate rest or recovery periods. The good news is, there are steps employers can take to minimize these activities. Training and education, workstation ergonomics, job rotation, breaks and workplace modification. Activities such as these can be incorporated into the company's safety program for each employee during their employment.

Training and Education

Employee training on MSD's should begin at orientation and include periodic refresher training, such as monthly safety meetings or Toolbox Talks. Training should include basic understanding of ergonomics, proper lifting techniques, use of material handling equipment and the importance of taking breaks. Finally, train staff about the early signs and symptoms of MSDs as these can help them seek timely medical attention early and/or prevent the condition from worsening. Repetition of this training is key for identification, reporting and minimizing MSD injuries and demonstrates the organization's commitment to safety.

Workstation Ergonomics

Many employees spend a lot of time at their workstation. This may include both the office setting or on the manufacturing floor. When designing a workstation, ensure it is designed to promote neutral body posture, adequate support as well as adjustability and modification. Equipment to consider for proper workstation ergonomics includes chairs with back support, adjustable desks, appropriate keyboard and mouse placement, and proper monitor height. Once the workstation is set up, do an audit to see how the setup is working. If you or the employee identify any additional opportunities for improvement, modify the workstation accordingly.

Job Rotation and Breaks

Job rotation and breaks are a great way to reduce injuries and can help reduce the risk of injuries associated with repetitive tasks. Identify alternate jobs for workers that can give affected muscle groups time to rest and recover. If job rotation is insufficient or not an option, be sure to allow employees ample breaks to prevent fatigue and minimize the potential for MSDs.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Depending on the nature of the work, certain jobs may require the use of personal protective equipment. Employers should provide appropriate PPE, such as anti-vibration gloves and knee pads to reduce the risk of MSDs. If you decide to use these types of PPE, be sure you research them and get the right type and size for the employee. Remember, one size does not fit all.

Reporting and Early Intervention

Establish a system to report MSD's and encourage employees to report signs or symptoms. Stress the importance of early detection so the issue can be addressed before an injury can occur. Employees should understand that early intervention, such as seeking medical evaluation and treatment, can help prevent further progression of the condition and facilitate a quicker recovery.

It is important for both employers and employees to prioritize the prevention and management of musculoskeletal disorders at work. By implementing ergonomic principles, promoting awareness, and fostering a supportive work environment, the risk of work-related MSDs can be significantly reduced.

If you have any further questions or comments about ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorders, please contact Andy Sawan at 330-819-4728 or by email Andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com.