

ERGONOMICS: DINING SERVICES

Preventive Measures and Controls

Material Handling

- Test the load before lifting to determine if it is light enough to lift.
- Plan your route before lifting and carrying the load.
- Separate heavy loads into smaller, lighter packages and make multiple trips. Use a cart or trolley or ask a co-worker for assistance.
- Place or store heavy items at mid-body height to make for easier retrieval.
- Do not lift objects that are slippery, are extremely hot or are unevenly balanced.
- Make sure you can fit through narrow spaces and that your fingers are out of the way when you set the object down.

Lifting Lowering and Carrying Loads

- Keep your arms and the load as close to your body as possible.
- Bend with your knees and let your legs and hips do most of the work.
- Do not arch your back.
- Use small steps when walking with a heavy load.
- Do not use fast or jerky movements when lifting, especially when lifting heavy objects.

Pushing and Pulling

- Always use two hands when pushing or pulling. Do not pull with one arm extended behind your body.
- Ensure that good visibility is possible without awkward motions such as twisting or stretching. If your vision is blocked when pushing a cart from the back, move to the front corner to push the cart.
- Keep your upper arms against your rib cage with your elbows in. Keep your hands at or slightly above waist level. Keep your feet shoulder width apart.
- Bend your knees slightly and move the load by shifting your weight.

Food Preparation

- Use knives with various handle sizes for larger and smaller hands. Handles with larger centers and slimmer ends make gripping more comfortable while chopping and cutting.
- Ergonomic knives with angled handles help keep your wrists in a neutral posture for specific cutting tasks. However, such knives may be impractical for cutting tasks that require irregular movements.
- Use the appropriate knife for the task. The steel in the blade should be easy to sharpen and should be regularly maintained to ensure that cutting takes minimal force and repetition.
- Ensure that meat slicing machines are placed at the correct height to minimize awkward postures of the wrists and shoulders. Follow appropriate meat slicing safety procedures, including using guards and proper cleaning techniques.

Cooking

- Use a soup kettle with extended handles when pouring soup into smaller containers.
- Use long handled whisks for two-handed stirring and short handled whisks for one-handed stirring.
- Handles with soft rubber surfaces and hard inner cores allow an optimal grip if the handle is wet or greasy. Handles with rounded edges and large diameters promote power grips rather than pinch grips.
- Use oven racks between your waist and elbow height to minimize awkward posture.

Cleaning and Washing

- Use wheeled carts whenever possible to reduce the need to carry bins loaded with dishes.
- Bend your knees to reach for low trays, dish racks or dish bins.
- Keep carrying trays, dish racks or dish bins as close to your body as possible when lifting.
- Do not place full dish racks into soak sinks because lifting and lowering racks into the sinks may strain your lower back and shoulders.
- Do not remove items that have any amount of water in them from soak sinks because the water will substantially increase their weight.
- Lower rinse nozzles to waist level to reduce your reach and use a power grip rather than a pinch grip.
- When rinsing dishes, spray directly in front of your body to prevent awkward shoulder posture.

General Recommendations

- Use anti-fatigue matting with beveled edges to help alleviate some of the stress associated with standing in one position for extended periods.
- Use footstools or foot rails to shift body weight and reduce stress on your lower back and legs when standing for long periods of time.
- Rotate through as many positions as possible to allow for variations in body use and postures to help reduce the strain on any one area of the body.