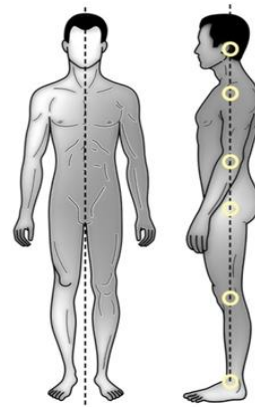# MSI Risk Factors
Awkward Postures

Awkward postures happen when a body part moves away from its neutral position. Activities that put a body part in an unnatural position force muscles, tendons and ligaments to work harder and increase pressure on spinal discs. Discomfort or pain develops and the posture becomes hard to maintain.

Examples of awkward postures:

- Reaching in front or to one side.
- Reaching overhead.
- Elevating shoulders.
- Twisting or bending your back, neck or wrist forward, backward or to one side.
- Kneeling, squatting or stooping.

Neutral body position or posture

Risk of injury increases when:

- A body part is out of neutral position.
- Muscles exert more force.
- The posture is repeated.
- The posture is held for long periods.

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MSI Risk Factors

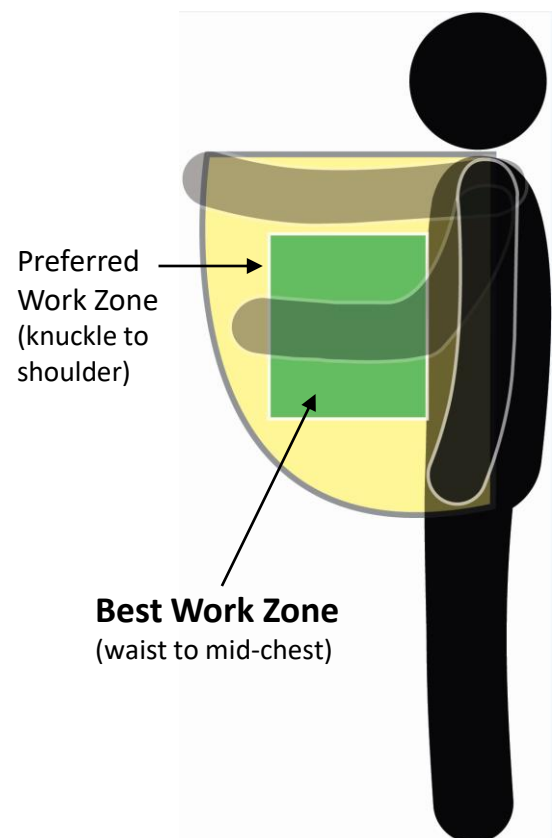## Awkward Postures

Engineering controls

- Design work stations and tasks to eliminate awkward postures.
- Provide height-adjustable work stations or platforms to raise and lower workers to appropriate working heights.
- Use step stools or ladders to avoid overhead reaching.
- Organize workstations to prevent excessive reaching.
- Provide adjustable equipment and machinery (like pallet lifts, turn tables, and mobile scissor lift tables).
- Place frequently used materials between mid-thigh and shoulder height.
- Select tools and equipment that allow workers to work in neutral postures.
- Provide sufficient lighting to avoid bending forward to see work.

What can you do?

- Be aware of your posture. Maintain neutral posture as much as possible.
- Adjust work station to perform work at the appropriate height.
- Remove clutter or obstacles in your workstation. Keep frequently used materials within easy reach.
- Change positions and tasks frequently.
- If you must work in awkward postures, take frequent microbreaks and stretch affected body parts to reduce stiffness and muscle fatigue.
- Take your regular scheduled breaks.
- Follow safe work practices and procedures.
- Report any ergonomics-related concerns and signs or symptoms of MSI.

Administrative controls

- Change work schedules. Rotate jobs to limit how often a worker uses awkward postures.
- Give workers a variety of job tasks that incorporate multiple movements and healthy postures each shift.
- Provide rest breaks and microbreaks.
- Develop and implement written safe work practices and procedures.
- Train workers in safe work practices and procedures.

Preferred Work Zone (knuckle to shoulder)

Best Work Zone (waist to mid-chest)

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