

MSI Risk Factors

Sustained Postures

Sustained postures refer to holding the body, or a body part, in the same position for an extended period. Even if your posture is neutral and the level of force is low, you may feel discomfort and pain if you stay in the same posture for too long.



Muscles must continuously contract in order to hold a fixed position. When muscles hold a fixed position, blood flow is reduced, muscles tire, and related soft tissues can become stressed.

Prolonged sitting and an inactive lifestyle are associated with many adverse health conditions.

Examples of sustained postures:

- Sitting for prolonged periods.
- Standing for prolonged periods.
- Raising arms to complete high-level or overhead work.
- Leaning over an assembly line for prolonged periods to work with product.
- Elevating shoulders to type.
- Using a computer mouse at a desk that is too high.
- Gripping a tool for prolonged periods.
- Stooping or crouching to complete low-level work.



Risk of injury increases as:

- The muscles have to exert higher levels of force.
- A body part moves farther away from its neutral position.
- The frequency of task increases.
- The length of time the posture is held increases.

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Engineering controls

- Provide easily adjustable work stations designed to fit the worker and task, and for workers to change postures.
- Improve layout of work stations enabling tools and materials to be kept close to the body.
- Provide step stools, ladders or adjustable work platforms to avoid prolonged periods of reaching to do high-level work.
- Provide portable kneeling creepers with chest support for floor-level work to reduce strain from kneeling or squatting.
- Provide anti-fatigue mats and footrests where workers stand for long periods.
- Provide suitably-designed seats for workers who sit for prolonged periods.

Administrative controls

- Rotate workers between various tasks that involve different muscles.
- Provide frequent microbreaks plus regular scheduled breaks so body tissues can recover.
- Reduce shift length or limit the amount of overtime.
- Develop and implement written safe work practices and procedures and train workers in them.



What can you do?

- Take regular scheduled breaks and frequent microbreaks in a different posture.
- Move and stretch to reduce stiffness and muscle fatigue.
- Adjust your work station to perform work in a neutral posture (work surface at appropriate height, tools and materials close to you).
- Wear footwear with shock-absorbing soles or insoles when working on hard-material surfaces such as concrete.
- Avoid holding tools when they are not being used.
- Follow safe work practices and procedures.
- Report ergonomics-related concerns and any signs or symptoms of MSI.

For additional information please contact:

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