

Occupational Hazards in Home Health Care



Ergonomics

* Dietary employees must perform many lifting, reaching, and repetitive tasks as part of their job duties. Employee activities in this area, if occurring with sufficient duration, magnitude, and / or frequency, may create a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD).

- **Reaching/lifting:**

- * Frequent elevated extended reaches for supplies or heavy containers can cause back and shoulder injury resulting in muscle strain, bursitis, tendonitis, and rotator cuff injuries.

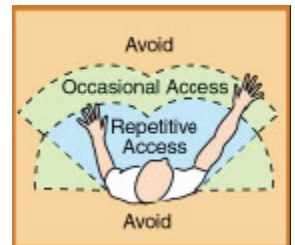
- **Repetitive motions:**

- * Rapid hand and wrist movements from frequent cutting, chopping, or scooping may lead to hand disorders such as tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and tenosynovitis.

- ** Possible Solutions – Assess worksites for ergonomics stressors and identify and address ways to decrease them such as:

Reaching / Lifting:

- Provide height adjustable workspaces appropriate for the task being performed, so that workers can keep elbows close to the body. For example, lower countertops, or use height adjustable countertops or stands, or provide work stands for employees.
- Redesign or reposition tasks to allow elbows to remain close to the body, (e.g., turn boxes over on their sides to allow for easier access).
- Avoid awkward postures (e.g., repositioning work in front of work rather than reaching above or behind to get supplies).
- Lighten the load that needs to be lifted or get help when lifting.
- Ask your Agency for training on how to use proper lifting techniques.
- Make sure stepladder is in good condition and used for items that are not reachable.



Repetitive Motions:

- When available use mechanical aids for chopping, dicing or mixing foods (e.g., food processors, mixers).
- Select and use properly designed tools. For example, kitchen scoops or kitchen knives that allows the wrist to remain straight.
- Maintain a neutral (handshake) wrist position.
- Restructure jobs to reduce repeated motions, forceful hand exertions, and prolonged bending.



Bent Wrist



Straight Wrist

Kitchen Knives



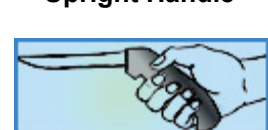
30 Degree Bend



Upright Handle



Pistol Grip



45 Degree Bend