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The Occupational  
Safety and Health  
Administration



## Ergonomics and Cumulative Trauma Injuries: The Basics

### OSHA

- Was created by the US Congress in 1979
- Works to ensure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women
- Sets and enforces standards
- Provides training, outreach, education and assistance

### Under OSHA, workers have the right to:

- A safe and healthful workplace
- Know about hazardous chemicals
- Information about injuries and illnesses in the workplace
- Request hazard correction from employer
- Training
- Hazard exposure and medical records
- File a complaint with OSHA
- Participate in an OSHA inspection
- Be free from retaliation for exercising safety and health rights



## Housekeeper Managers:

## Improving Housekeeping Work using Ergonomics



### Institute for Ergonomics

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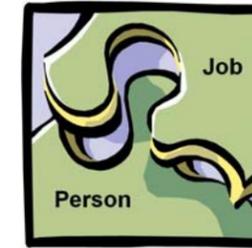
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### Presented by:

Institute for Ergonomics  
The Ohio State University  
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### Ergonomics

“ The science of designing jobs, equipment, and workplaces to fit the person ”

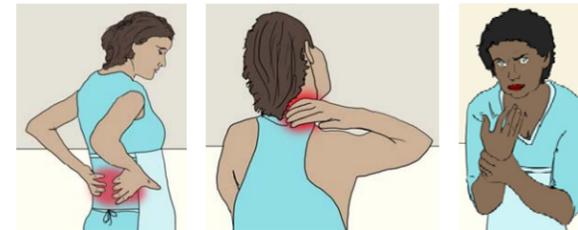


- Ergonomics principles are all around us, both at work and at home
- This pamphlet shows how ergonomics can be applied to housekeeping work

#### Benefits of Ergonomics:

- Improves **efficiency** of housekeeping work
- Increases work **quality**
- Reduces discomfort or pain in housekeepers
- Lowers housekeeper injury risk
- Allows housekeepers to work more easily

**Cumulative Trauma Injuries** develop over a period of weeks, months, or years and can result in back, wrist, shoulder, and neck pain



**Overexertion** can irritate the body's muscles and tendons, but tendons take much longer to heal

Some housekeeping tasks can put a lot of **pressure on the discs in the back**, which are the “shock absorbers” between vertebrae



#### Examples



Lifting or pushing heavy objects

Twisting (e.g., to clean tubs)

Bending at the waist

Some housekeeping tasks can cause **pain in the neck and shoulders** (e.g., irritated, swollen, or torn tendons)



#### Examples



Scrubbing bathroom walls

Cleaning mirrors



Dusting

Vacuuming



#### Symptoms of Possible Cumulative Trauma Injury:

- Chronic, nagging pain or tenderness
- Muscle weakness
- Fatigue
- Joint stiffness or reduced flexibility
- Numbness in hands



#### Injury Risk Factors Among Housekeepers:

- **Forceful exertions** (e.g., lifting heavy mattresses, pushing heavy supply carts, using vacuum cleaners or bathtubs)
- **Awkward postures** (e.g., cleaning bathroom floors or bathtubs)
- **Repetitive activities** (e.g., putting on pillowcases, cleaning mirrors, vacuuming)
- **Similar work postures** for long periods (e.g., standing, kneeling)
- **No muscle rest** while working (e.g., doing many tasks using the same hand or arm)



# Making Housekeeping Work Easier

## The Work System

### The Housekeeping "System"

Components that impact safety and efficiency:



#### Work Environment

Examples: number of beds in room; high-end or budget hotel

#### Tools and Equipment

Examples: style and condition of vacuum; length of brush handles

#### Employee

Examples: size and physical condition; attitude towards job

#### Job Task

Examples: cleaning walk-in shower vs. tub; floor-mopping method

### Successful Work Systems

- **Management** must:
  - Be committed to improving the system
  - Provide resources for success to occur
- **Supervisors** must:
  - Empower employees to take part in identifying problems and finding solutions
  - Be proactive in seeking positive changes
- **Employees** must:
  - Understand basics of injury risks & symptoms
  - Take responsibility for their own health and safety

### Consider Team Cleaning

- Housekeepers work together to do job
- Can benefit the *employee* — examples:
  - Reduces isolated work; builds social support
  - Improves employees' occupational and communication skills
  - Empowers workers and increases morale
- Can benefit the *employer* — examples:
  - Increases retention, work quality and productivity
  - Reduces labor and equipment costs, supervisor's quality-check time, employee's temptation to steal



### Room Design

- Consider how room features make housekeeping easier or more difficult

## Alternative Work Methods

### Bed-Making Postures:

- Encourage use of less-awkward postures when lifting mattresses or tucking sheets



### Vacuum Use:

- Align with body
- Alternate hands
- Proper height setting
- Empty bag frequently



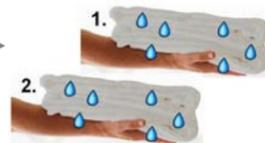
### Supply Carts:

- Keep most items between hips and chest
- Move using both hands
- Align wheels before movement
- Empty trash frequently
- Replenish cart more often
- Report cart problems to supervisor



### Cleaning Bathrooms:

- Stand inside tub, if allowed (stand on rag)
- Keep dirty towels off floor
- Do work at waist level as often as possible
- Do not carry large or heavy weights; make more trips if possible
- Alternate arms when cleaning surfaces



## Products to Consider

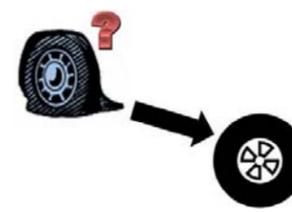
### For Beds:

- Fitted sheets instead of flat sheets
- Bed-making tools



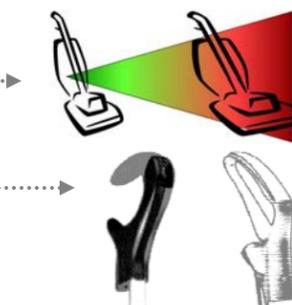
### For Supply Carts:

- Larger, harder wheels
- Replace worn wheels
- Motorized carts



### For Vacuuming:

- Lighter-weight
- Self-propelled or brush-assist
- "Ergonomic" handles
- Alternatives to uprights (e.g., canisters, backpacks)



### For Bathrooms:

- Long-handled brushes and scrubbers
- Brushes and sprayers with more-comfortable grips



### For Dusting:

- Micro-fiber products
- Extended handles



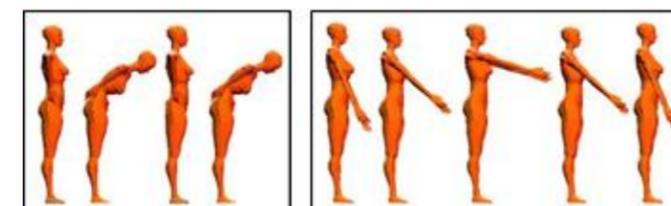
## Housekeeper Health

### Encourage Housekeepers To:

- Wear comfortable shoes at work



- "Warm-up" their bodies before starting work



Back

Arms and Shoulders

- Report any unusual aches or pains



In back

In neck

In shoulders

In elbows

- Communicate ways they have found to make the job easier



- Improve their well-being (e.g., balanced diet, regular exercise, plenty of sleep)

