

Ergonomics

Occupational Therapy in the Workplace



Ergonomics is the science of designing a person's environment so that it facilitates the highest level of function. A person's work environment should fit the capabilities of the worker. Good ergonomics prevent injury and promote health, safety, and comfort for employees. The use of ergonomics principles can increase worker productivity and quality. Employers can implement a program that includes guidelines for employees to follow, contributes to an efficient work environment, prevents injuries and the development of chronic medical conditions, and helps employees return to work after an injury has occurred.

Occupational therapy practitioners are trained in the structure and function of the human body and the effects of illness and injury. They also can determine how the components of the workplace can facilitate a healthy and efficient environment or one that could cause injury or illness. An occupational therapist can help employers identify hazards that may contribute to on-the-job injury, and determine how it can be eliminated.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Identify** and eliminate accident and injury risk factors in the workplace, such as actions associated with repetition, force, fixed or awkward postures, poorly designed tool handles, heavy loads, distance, vibration, noise, extreme temperatures, poor lighting, and psychosocial and other occupational stresses.
- **Analyze** job functions and job descriptions based on job tasks.
- **Design** pre-hire screenings to determine a candidate's suitability to a particular job.
- **Modify** tools and equipment so that they do not enable injury or illness.
- **Provide** education and training on injury prevention, workplace health and safety regulations, and managing job-related stress.

- **Determine** reasonable accommodations and work-site accessibility that is in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- **Recommend** changes employers can take to minimize injury and accident risk factors.

What can a person do to employ good ergonomics in the workplace?

- **Take** a proactive approach to preventing injury in the workplace.
- **Follow** guidelines set forth by employers that may prevent injury and illness.
- **Report** hazards or poor work conditions or employee behavior that may contribute to illness or injury in the workplace.

Need more information?

Proper workplace ergonomics is important and should be addressed by both employers and employees. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist about an ergonomics evaluation, practitioners are available through most hospitals, community clinics, and medical centers.

with a broad range of physical, developmental, and psychological conditions. Practitioners also help clients and their caregivers with strategies that can prevent injury and secondary complications, and support health and well-being. Contact your local health organizations for more information.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children

 The Fund To
Promote Awareness of
Occupational Therapy