Ergonomics for Housekeeping Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Ergonomics in housekeeping isn't just about comfort, it's about preventing injuries. Housekeeping tasks often involve awkward postures and repetitive motions, leading to muscle strain and long-term health problems. By incorporating ergonomic principles, housekeepers can avoid these risks and work more safely and efficiently.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Housekeeping involves a lot of physical activity and repetitive motions, leading to ergonomic hazards if proper precautions are not taken. Here are some potential dangers:

1. **Musculoskeletal Injuries:** The repetitive tasks involved in housekeeping, such as bending, lifting, pushing, and pulling, can lead to strains, sprains, and other musculoskeletal injuries, especially in the back, shoulders, and wrists.
2. **Poor Posture:** Constant bending, reaching, and lifting without proper posture can strain muscles and lead to back pain, neck pain, and other posture-related issues.
3. **Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs):** Performing the same movements repeatedly, such as scrubbing or vacuuming, can lead to RSIs like carpal tunnel syndrome or tendonitis.
4. **Heavy Lifting:** Moving heavy furniture, equipment, or supplies without proper lifting techniques or assistance can strain muscles and lead to back injuries.
5. **Awkward Working Positions:** Cleaning tasks often require reaching into tight spaces, awkward postures, or working at heights, increasing the risk of strains, sprains, and falls.
6. **Vibration:** Operating vibrating equipment, such as floor

scrubbers or buffers, for extended periods can lead to hand-arm vibration syndrome, causing numbness, tingling, and reduced dexterity in the hands and arms.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

1. **Training:** Provide comprehensive training on proper lifting techniques, correct posture, and safe work practices to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.
2. **Use of Ergonomic Equipment:** Invest in ergonomic cleaning tools and equipment designed to reduce strain and fatigue, such as lightweight vacuums and adjustable height-carts.
3. **Adjustable Workstations:** Provide adjustable-height workstations and tools to accommodate employees of different heights and body sizes, allowing them to work comfortably without straining.
4. **Encourage Breaks:** Encourage housekeeping staff to take regular breaks to rest and stretch their muscles, especially during long shifts or when performing repetitive tasks.
5. **Rotate Tasks:** Rotate housekeeping tasks to vary the types of movements and muscles used, reducing the risk of overuse injuries and monotony.

Housekeeping tasks can be demanding, but with a few simple tricks, you can turn them into smooth routines that protect your body. Here are some tips:

Pushing Housekeeping Carts:

1. **Empty Carts Regularly:** Ensure that housekeeping carts are not overloaded with supplies, linens, or trash. Empty the carts frequently to reduce weight and make pushing easier.
2. **Use Proper Pushing Techniques:** Encourage staff to push the cart with their whole body, using their legs rather than their back muscles. Keep the back straight and engage the abdominal muscles for stability.
3. **Choose Ergonomic Carts:** Invest in carts with ergonomic design features, such as padded handles and swivel wheels, to reduce strain on the wrists and shoulders and improve

maneuverability.

Making Beds:

1. **Optimize Body Positioning:** Encourage housekeeping staff to position themselves properly when making beds. Bend at the knees instead of the waist to reduce strain on the lower back.
2. **Use Supportive Equipment:** Provide staff with knee pads or mats to cushion their knees when kneeling on hard surfaces while tucking in sheets or adjusting bedding.
3. **Work Efficiently:** Teach staff to work systematically when making beds, starting from one corner and moving methodically around the bed. This reduces unnecessary bending and reaching.
4. **Minimize Strain:** Avoid overreaching across the bed when tucking in sheets or arranging pillows. Instead, move around the bed to maintain a comfortable working position.

Cleaning Bathrooms:

1. **Use Long-Handled Tools:** Provide long-handled brushes or scrubbers to clean hard-to-reach areas in bathrooms, reducing the need for bending and stooping.
2. **Protect Knees:** Supply knee pads or mats to protect cleaners' knees when kneeling on hard surfaces. Alternatively, use a foam kneeling mat stored on the cleaning cart for added comfort.
3. **Work from Top to Bottom:** Start cleaning tasks from the top of the bathroom (e.g., mirrors, shelves) and work your way down to the bottom (e.g., floors). This minimizes bending and reaching.
4. **Take Regular Breaks:** Encourage staff to take short breaks between cleaning tasks to rest and stretch their muscles, reducing fatigue and preventing overexertion.

If a housekeeper is experiencing pain at work, here's what they can do:

Immediately:

- **Stop the Activity:** If the pain is caused by a specific activity, stop doing it immediately.
- **Report the Pain:** Inform their supervisor about the pain and its location.
- **Seek Medical Attention:** Depending on the severity, they might need to see a doctor or occupational health professional for evaluation and treatment.

FINAL WORD

Housekeepers frequently perform tasks that strain their bodies. Awkward bending and constant repetitive motions can lead to Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs). These are painful conditions that can limit mobility and affect job performance. Protect your body!