Restaurant Ergonomics Infographic

TDI | Safety @ Work
Division of Workers' Compensation

Ergonomics for the Food Services Industry Fact Sheet

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For the estimated 12.3 million food service workers in the U.S.,[1] repetitive movements, standing in one place for long periods, awkward postures, or improperly designed workstations and equipment lead to a higher risk of injuries. **Musculoskeletal injuries** -- conditions that affect the body's muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, and nerves -- accounted for $124.1 million in paid losses in the food services industry from 2013 to 2017.[2]

Ergonomics, the process of designing a job to fit the employee, can reduce these costs and make the work safer and more efficient. When implemented as part of a comprehensive workplace program in restaurants and bars, ergonomics also helps reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, and decrease the chance for higher insurance premiums.

For these reasons, employers should establish safety training, best practices, and proper equipment to decrease ergonomic injury risks associated with:

- bending;
- compression or contact stress;
- forceful exertions;
- insufficient rest breaks;



- lifting;
- noise;
- pushing and pulling;
- reaching
- repetitive motions;
- awkward postures;
- static or sustained postures;
- temperature extremes; and
- vibration.

Understanding these risk factors and encouraging wait staff, cooks, food preparation workers, bartenders, dishwashers, and food services managers to practice basic ergonomic principles are the first defense against injury and lost productivity. The good news is there are many ways to prevent job-specific ergonomic injuries from occurring.

Ergonomics for Waitstaff

Waitstaff often carry heavy loads and loose items, such as trays, plates, or beverages to tables. Their job tasks can lead to awkward postures, sprains, strains, and various musculoskeletal injuries, making it nearly impossible to do their job. However, modifications can reduce these injuries.

The human body functions best in comfortable, neutral postures. **Awkward body postures** can increase the stress on ligaments and joints, leading to fatigue, discomfort, and injury. Servers may not feel pain or discomfort when in awkward postures, but the potential for harm remains present. Posture awareness can encourage waitstaff to

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