

SECTION 2: MINIMIZING ERGONOMIC HAZARDS

I. Awareness of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs):

Signs and symptoms of MSDs of the upper extremities may include pain, numbness, or tingling of the fingers, wrists, elbows, or shoulders. Chronic back and neck problems may result in pain, numbness, or tingling that radiates to the arms or legs, as well as limited back motion.

Back pain and other ergonomically-based symptoms can result from acute injury due to a single overexertion incident, or may result from cumulative trauma due to chronic overexertion, improper work practices, or poor working postures. Cumulative trauma may be exacerbated by inadequate work-rest cycles.

II. Preventive Actions:

Reducing the risk of MSD problems can be achieved by:

- Evaluating the workplace to identify MSD risk factors;
- Encouraging employee awareness and providing education through the self-assessment;
- Using ergonomically appropriate work practices;
- Making ergonomically sound workplace adjustments;
- Properly using ergonomically designed tools and furniture (i.e., providing flexibility for adjustments and allowing for proper individual posture);
- Performing five minutes of alternative work activity for every 30 minutes of continuous, high intensity, repetitive work;
- Seeking evaluation and intervening as soon as symptoms of MSD occur;
- Using proper lifting techniques;
- Obtaining assistance or using mechanical lifting devices for tasks that exceed an individual's capabilities.

III. Early Intervention:

Early intervention is essential to the long-term prevention of and quick recovery from MSDs. It is extremely important for employees to report any MSD symptoms as soon as possible. MSDs usually develop gradually; symptoms such as pain, numbness, and tingling in the upper extremities are often ignored until the condition becomes chronic or permanent injury occurs. Employees experiencing symptoms are encouraged to contact their supervisor and/or complete the [ergonomic self-assessment](#) for office-related concerns on the EH&S website.

IV. Workplace Evaluations:

The ergonomics program and services described in these guidelines are applicable to most persons working at UR except those who work at home (except via video call) or outside Monroe County. For those employees outside of Monroe County, please contact [Finger Lakes Occupational Health Services](#) or call 244-4771.

Priority will be given to employees with reported MSD symptoms, employees with diagnosed MSDs, and employees who work in identified high-risk jobs or departments. EH&S staff members are available to help with evaluating and redesigning workstations, tasks, and work practices.

For computer workstations, the following process has been laid out:

- An [ergonomic self-assessment](#) should first be completed by staff with ergonomic concerns.
- After employees take the self-assessment, they are encouraged to make recommended adjustments for approximately two weeks to see if their concerns are resolved.
- For those still needing assistance after the self-assessment, it's recommended to contact EH&S directly at questions@safety.rochester.edu or call (585) 275-3241 and request an in-person assessment.
- After an in-person assessment, EH&S will send out a report evaluation outlining recommended equipment and other solutions to address the ergonomic concern(s).

For other ergonomic concerns not related to computer workstations, it's recommended to contact EH&S directly at 275-3241.

V. Recordkeeping:

Records of employee reports of MSDs, self-assessments, ergonomic reports, and workstation assessments are kept by EH&S. Records of work restrictions and the HCP's (Health Care Professional) written opinion are kept on file by Leave Administration according to their internal policies and are not kept on file by EH&S.