



MAKING ERGONOMICS PRACTICAL

From lower back pain to carpal tunnel syndrome, more than 1 million American workers experience the cumulative effects of heavy lifting, bad posture and poor workstation design - all of which place tremendous strain on muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. In fact, more than 600,000 workers suffer lost workdays to musculoskeletal disorders each year, according to OSHA and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To prevent such injuries and reduce the associated costs, companies are looking for practical ergonomic solutions to biomechanical problems. Some employers are finding that working closely with employees on ergonomics issues can result in improved health and productivity.

Many businesses employ workers who have unknowingly exposed themselves to ergonomic hazards for years, according to Kurt Rever, a psychosocial ergonomist for Windham Group in Manchester, NH. Companies should work with employees to identify the improper work techniques used over long periods of time, and redesign those jobs to reduce fatigue and chance of injury.

Posture and Practice

- Sometimes an ergonomic solution can mean teaching employees new body mechanic techniques that help them perform tasks safely and free of pain.
- Easy changes of posture can provide relief and recovery to inflamed areas. An example of this is moving mats closer to workstations to reduce workers' reach as they perform tasks. The greater the reach, the further the distance from the center of the body and the greater the muscle strain.

Case in Point

- Many companies have had success implementing simple ergonomic techniques. Motorola found 40 percent of employees in accounts payable department were reporting arm or wrist fatigue by the end of the workday.
- To reduce these injuries, Motorola created several easy-to-implement solutions: mandatory ergonomics training, employee workstation evaluations, and adjustments and exercise development to relieve stiffness and stress.
- These improvements resulted in 70 percent decrease in employee stress and employees felt that the program made them feel better physically.

Bringing It Home

- One of the challenges of any ergonomics program is sustaining employee participation. Companies with good ergonomics programs find ways to relate techniques to life beyond work.
- The ergonomic program should be practical to implement, simple to understand and make a difference in people's lives. Most employees do not want back injuries but they aren't motivated by reduced workers' compensation claims.
- Employee's personal lives away from work are the driving force. This is what motivates people. Make the ergonomics program relevant to employees; inspire them to want good posture and to lift properly.

To read the full article and find out more about ergonomics, go to our website, www.21stcenturyrehab.com and click on Our Services button. From there, click on the Work Well button to your left. All information from this article comes from the National Safety Council (www.nsc.org).

More on ergonomics on the web:

Visit the OSHA website to view ergonomic guidelines. (<http://www.osha.gov>)

Happy Workers are Safer Workers: Job Satisfaction Makes Safety a Priority

Everyone in the working world has seen the type. They walk around moping about being at work and spend most of their day clockwatching. We write them off as disgruntled workers, but do we think about how they could affect our safety?

Studies have shown a direct correlation between job satisfaction and worker safety - the happier the worker, the safer the worker. One study, which was conducted by researchers from the Department of Social Psychology at the University of Helsinki in Finland, focused on the link between employee perceptions of workplace safety and job satisfaction. The study specifically examined the relationships between job satisfaction and work compliance with safety management policies and accident frequency. It found workers who perceive a positive safety climate within their organization were safer on the job. Workers who perceive job insecurity, anxiety and stress exhibit a decline in safe behaviors. Researchers also noted that when workers believe their employer cares about their well-being and satisfaction, they exhibit safe behaviors.

5 Ways Employers Can Create a Satisfying Work Environment

- Build employees' competence and self-confidence through training, feedback and recognition.
- Communicate the value of the organization's products and services, and the role the organization plays in the markets where it operates.
- Encourage and reward thoughtful risk taking.
- Encourage positive workplace relations.
- Encourage meaningful rest breaks and light diversions.

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21st Century Rehab - Company News

DOT Drug Testing Now Available

21st Century Rehab is now certified and trained in accordance with DOT regulations for drug testing. We offer this service at our outpatient clinics in Altoona, Grimes, Indianola and Madrid. The DOT drug screen is a urine test for five drugs: amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, opiates, phencyclidine (PCP). All test results are handled in a prompt professional manner, with your company's designated employer representative is advised of the positive or negative findings.

Hair Follicle Testing

21st Century Rehab also provides hair follicle testing at its outpatient locations. Hair follicle testing is a process in which hair specimens are analyzed for illegal drugs. When a drug is ingested, it entered the blood stream and is broken down to a specific metabolite. When a hair sample is screened, both the parent drug and the metabolite is isolated. In our five panel test, drugs analyzed include: cocaine, opiates, methamphetamines, phencyclidine (PCP), and marijuana. If a Medical Officer is wanted or needed to review results, an additional charge does apply.

21st Century Rehab also provides: Safety Consulting Services or Help on Writing Drug and/or Safety Policies:

Please contact Jason at 515-291-0827 for more information.

Occupational Health Services Questions?

Contact Jason Horras, Occupational Health Director, at 515-291-0827 or Dhiren Narotam at 515-202-4697.

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