Restaurant Ergonomics

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Restaurant work is fast paced, often done in areas with limited space, and frequently performed by young workers—all ingredients for workplace injuries. In addition to injuries such as burns and cuts, restaurant workers frequently experience strain and sprain type injuries from repetitive motions, awkward and static postures, and excessive forces.

The following are some tips and resources for preventing these types of injuries:

**Serving/Bussing**
- Reduce tray carrying as much as possible. Use carts if there is enough room between tables and get help when serving large parties.
- Use both hands to carry large, heavy items like water jugs or coffee urns.
- Stand as close as possible to the customer you are serving. Ask the customer to help with passing plates rather than leaning forward and reaching.
- Ensure that spills are cleaned up immediately to avoid slips and falls.
- Get help to lift and move tables, chairs, or any other heavy, awkward items.
- Bring bus tubs to the tables, and DON’T overfill. Use smaller bus tubs to limit the amount that can be carried, thus reducing the weight carried. If available, use a cart.
- Wear shoes with cushioned insoles to help relieve foot and leg pain associated with standing and walking.

**Kitchen Staff**
- Keep knives sharp to reduce the forces required to cut food.
- If work surfaces of varying heights are available, work at a comfortable height for the task.
- If standing for long periods of time, shift your weight and change positions often. Put one foot up about six inches. If available, use a stool to sit down.
- Place anti-fatigue mats at standing work stations or consider padded flooring for the kitchen to reduce fatigue while standing.
- Reduce reaching. Keep frequently used items close to and in front of the body (up to the shaded area) and keep less frequently used items in the secondary area (lighter boxes).

**Resources**
- Work Smarter, Not Harder,a publication from Cal/OSHA for restaurant workers, [www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp). Available in 5 languages - English, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Also, Ergonomics for Very Small Business Restaurant and Bar (Poster)
- Restaurant Strains and Sprains Prevention for Teen Workers (Fed/OSHA) [www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/restaurant/strains_foodprep.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/restaurant/strains_foodprep.html)

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