

# NORTHSTAR REGIONAL

## Workplace Safety Highlight

### Ergonomic Consciousness



Did you know you could easily suffer injury, simply by sitting at your desk? Of course, a strains or sprains are more likely to occur when moving your body, but they can happen sitting too. Learn more below to keep yourself safe.

### Strains & sprains are among the most common injuries.

First, let's clarify the two terms. *Strains* are soft tissue injuries that can affect muscles, nerves, tendons, joints and cartilage in the limbs, neck, and lower back. *Sprains* are injuries to the bands of tissues (ligaments) that connect bones together. So, how do they show up in all occupations? Strain and sprain injuries are often caused by completing tasks that were set up without *ergonomics* in mind, in both seated and standing positions. Therefore, the only way around these type of injuries is to practice ergonomic consciousness.

## Compliance: Safety Best Practices

Ergonomics is something that is well trained for professionals on their feet, especially those involved with heavy lifting. Even in daily life, you may have heard the classic rule, “lift with your legs”. That’s an ergonomically conscious move. Plainly, ergonomics is a step beyond posture and is defined as “relating to or designed for efficiency and comfort in the working environment”. In the case of our heavy lift, an upright posture with force placed on your legs rather than a back is not only more comfortable and strain preventative, there’s more power in the average person’s legs, making it more efficient.



Breaking it down, tasks might be too heavy, awkward, or repetitive for employees to safely complete, which increases their chances of developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). There’s a lot to consider when attempting to be ergonomically conscious in any workplace or role. So, follow these 3 steps below to ensure you’re keeping yourself safe.

### *3-Step Practice for Reducing Strains & Sprains*

#### **1. Determine potential causes of strains and sprains at your site**

Are there any environmental factors you need to consider?

- Is your chair and desk-space at a height & distance appropriate to your size?
- Are there physical obstacles or barriers preventing you from having proper posture?
- Do you have the proper supports? (firm chair, wrist pad, wrist guard, lifting belt, etc)

#### **2. Evaluate your job tasks and identify those with potential risk factors**

What are frequent and repeated actions you take and do you recognize the harm they can create without proper ergonomics?

### 3. Reduce hazards

How are you responding to the circumstances above and setting yourself up for sustained health and sprain/strain prevention?

- Literally web search “proper ergonomics for \_\_\_\_\_” and include your primary task (desk work, driving, lifting, walking etc.)
- Set intermittent checkpoints for alarms or reminders to “reset ergonomics”. Remember, strains and sprains are almost always from becoming unconscious to your ergonomics for extended periods of time.
- If you feel you could use greater accommodations, are risking a strain or sprain, or sense you have sustained one, record it and report it to a supervisor immediately.

## Looking for More Information?

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