



# SPRAINS AND STRAINS

... and how to avoid them

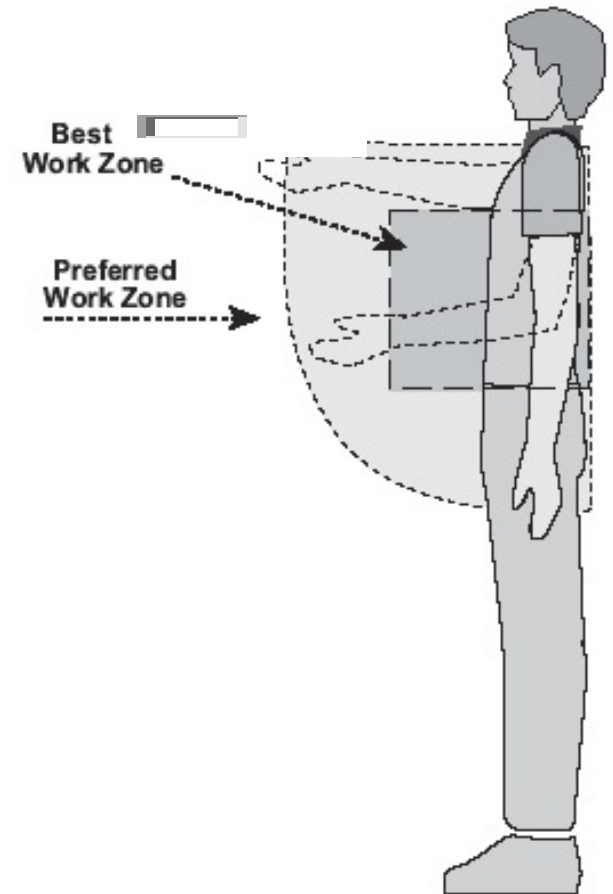
This material was produced under grant number SH29657SH6 from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Training materials developed with grant funds will be posted at <http://www.osha.gov/dte/library>

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- This training is to help workers recognize when they can correct the way they perform a job, so that they can prevent and reduce the aches and pains of poor ergonomics
- With this training, workers can reduce the potential of serious injuries and persistent musculoskeletal disorders, so that they do not lose income from being in pain and out of work

# ERGONOMICS

- Ergonomics reduces the risk of injuries by designing jobs to fit the worker
- Sprains and strains in the laundry industry are usually caused by overexertion, repetitive motions and awkward postures
- The most common injuries involve the musculoskeletal system, and affect the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, nerves, blood vessels, or related soft tissue
- Signs and symptoms include redness, swelling, pain, tenderness, and weakness of affected area
- Work-related musculoskeletal injuries can make normal work routines uncomfortable and even painful.
- This can lead to stress, or dissatisfaction at work, decreased productivity, being unable to perform some or all work duties, and even difficulty with activities at home.

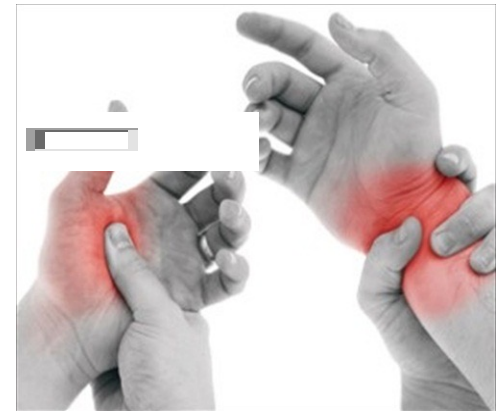


# RISK FACTORS

**Work that includes force, repetition, awkward posture, static posture, contact stress, and long duration can cause musculoskeletal injury.**

In laundries, the tasks that are most at risk are:

- Picking up and sorting dirty laundry
- Inserting and removing laundry from washers and dryers
- Folding and wrapping laundry
- Pushing and pulling carts, and delivering laundry



# SHORT-TERM AND LONG TERM INJURIES

**Short term injuries take place suddenly.** For example:

- Falling while carrying a heavy bag of laundry
- Hitting an elbow on a washer door when pulling out wet laundry

**Long term injuries develop over time.** For example:

- Chronic back pain resulting from manual materials handling
- Shoulder tendinitis resulting from continual repetitive use.

In the worst cases, such injuries can leave a worker not able to complete his or her everyday duties and tasks, both in the workplace and elsewhere.

# TYPICAL MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURY SIGNS

Sign	Description
Redness	Does the skin look red?
Swelling	Does the area look swollen?
Loss of full, normal joint movement	Can you move the joint as you normally would? Your normal full range of motion may be uncomfortable or painful. For example, rotate your shoulder in a circular motion. Do you think you would be able to do this if you had a shoulder injury?

# TYPICAL MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURY SYMPTOMS

Symptom	Description
Pain (shooting, dull or sharp)	Pain is the most common feeling. It may be present or you may only feel it when you try to use the injured part of your body.
Tenderness	Does the area feel painful or sensitive when you touch it?
Tingling, pins and needles, or numbness	You may feel a tingling in the injured area. You may also lose feeling in that area.
Heaviness	Do you feel the injured area weighs more than normal?
Heat or burning	Does the injured area feel warmer than normal? You may feel a burning sensation.
Clumsiness or weakness	Do you find yourself dropping things more often? Is it hard to hold objects? Is it hard to hold on to things that are usually easy for you?

# STAGES OF MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES

## Early Stage

- Aching or fatigue may be present during work but lessen or disappear with rest (for example, overnight or on weekends). No effects on work performance is usually noticed, nor are there any signs of a problem. This could last for weeks or months.

## Middle Stage

- Pain, aching, and fatigue may be present at work and at home. Visible signs may also be present. This stage could last for months.

## Late Stage

- Pain, aching and fatigue may be present even when the affected limb is rested. Performance of work duties and sleep are affected. Visible signs of injury are present and this stage could last for months or years, especially if left untreated.



# WAYS TO REDUCE RISK OF INJURY (FORCE)

- Before lifting a load, test to see if it is light enough to lift. If not, separate the loads or use a cart
- Plan your route before lifting and carrying the load
- Keep your arms and the load as close to your body as possible
- Avoid tasks below mid-thigh and above shoulder height. Instead, use a mechanical lift or lower a shelf
- Stand when handling a heavy or unbalanced load
- Hold the load with a firm, powerful grip
- Tighten your stomach and trunk muscles and breathe out as you lift
- Bend your knees and let your legs and hips do most of the work

## WAYS TO REDUCE RISK OF INJURY (FORCE) continued

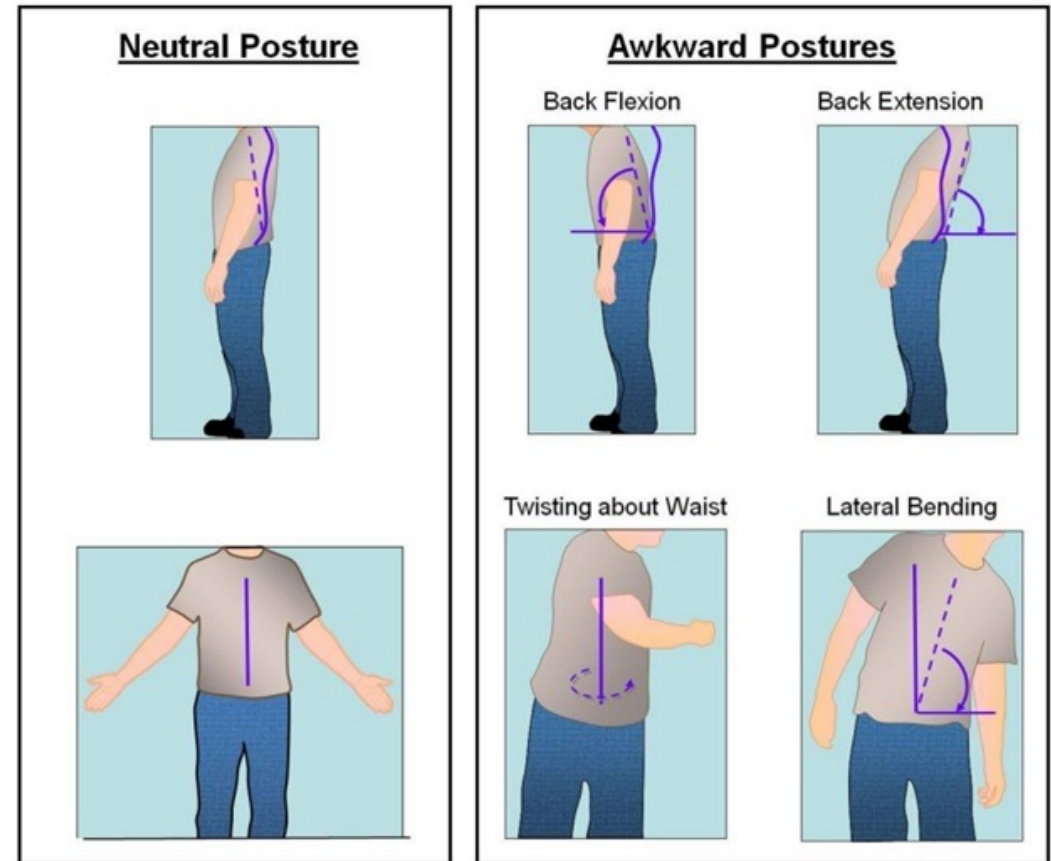
- Work with your feet shoulder width apart to widen your stance
- Point your toes in the direction you are reaching to avoid twisting
- When pushing and pulling, make sure the handles are between waist and shoulder height; keep your upper arms against your rib cage with your elbows in. Keep your hands at or slightly above waist level.
- When pushing and pulling, take small steps when turning corners to avoid twisting your back
- Push a load – it is generally safer than pulling

## WAYS TO REDUCE RISK OF INJURY (REPETITION)

- Alternate working positions to avoid overusing any single muscle or group of muscles
- Rotate jobs by varying tasks such as folding, deliver, pickups, and sorting throughout the day
- Stretch for 5 or 10 minutes before starting work to warm up your muscles. Stretching helps circulate blood through the muscles, develops flexibility and increases body awareness
- Take breaks to give your muscles a chance to recover

# WAYS TO REDUCE RISK OF INJURY (AWKWARD POSTURE)

- Move your body closer to the object or move the object closer to you
- Keep your elbows as close to your body as possible
- If the work area is too high, lower the work area or stand on a platform or footstool
- Sit on a stool or chair rather than squatting, kneeling or bending over while working



# EXERCISES YOU CAN DO

## NECK AND SHOULDER STRETCH

This stretches the sternocleidomastoid, pectoralis major, and deltoid muscles.



**Position:** Stand with the feet shoulder width apart and the arms behind the body.

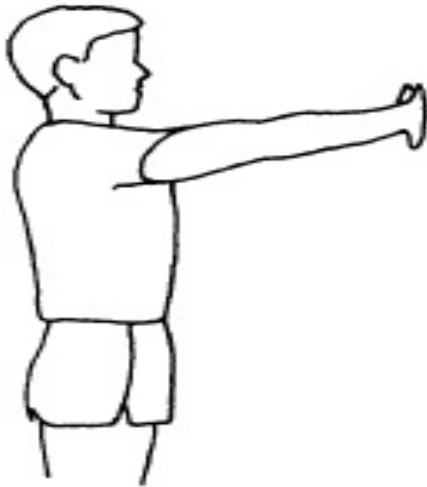


**Action:** Grasp the left wrist with the right hand. Pull the left arm down and to the right. Tilt the head to the right. Hold this position for 10 to 15 seconds. Repeat the action with the right wrist, pulling the right arm down and to the left. Tilt the head to the left.

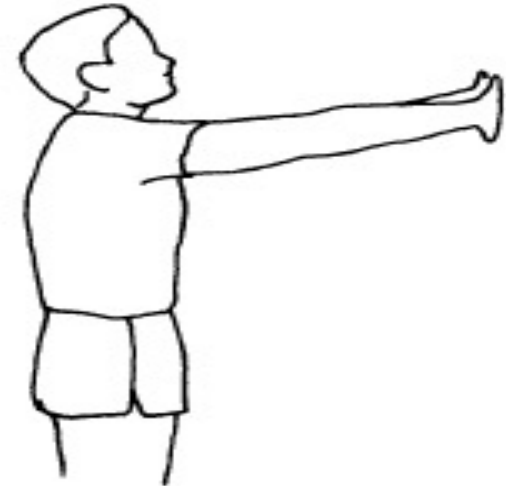
# EXERCISES YOU CAN DO

## UPPER-BACK STRETCH

This stretches the lower trapezius and posterior deltoid muscles of the upper back.



**Position:** Stand with the arms extended to the front at shoulder height with the fingers interlaced and palms facing outward.



**Action:** Extend the arms and shoulders forward. Hold this position for 10 to 15 seconds. Return to the starting position.

# EXERCISES YOU CAN DO

## 7 Stretches in 7 Minutes: Reduce the Risk of Back Pain

GROIN - 3 Thigh Adductors

Grasping feet with hands and bending from hips, gently pull forward until stretch is felt. Hold 30 seconds.



Repeat 2 times.  
Do 1 sessions per day.

HIP OBLIQUE - 7 External Rotators

From position shown, pull knee across body toward the opposite shoulder until stretch is felt. Hold 30 seconds. Repeat with other knee.



Repeat 2 times.  
Do 1 sessions per day.

HAMSTRINGS - 6 Side Bend



With feet apart, pull head toward knee until stretch is felt. Hold 30 seconds. Repeat toward other knee. Repeat 2 times. Do 1 sessions per day.

HAMSTRINGS - 7 Leg Raise



HIP OBLIQUE - 6 External Rotators



UPPER LEG - 6 Quadriceps

From starting position, raise leg until stretch is felt. Hold 30 seconds. Repeat with other leg.



# The OSH Act of 1970 protects your rights to work in a safe and healthy workplace

- The OSH Act protects workers who complain to their employer, OSHA or other government agencies about unsafe or unhealthful working conditions .
- Help is available from OSHA for whistleblowers. \*
- However, you have a limited right under the OSH Act to refuse to do a job because conditions are hazardous.
- You may refuse to do a job only when
  - you believe that you face death or serious injury (and the situation is so clearly hazardous that any reasonable person would believe the same thing);
  - you have tried, where possible but unsuccessfully, to get your employer to correct the condition and there is no other way to do the job safely; and
  - the situation is so urgent that you do not have time to eliminate the hazard through regulatory channels such as calling OSHA.
- OSHA cannot enforce union contracts or state laws that give employees the right to refuse to work.



# WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?

- Under federal law, you are entitled to a safe workplace. Your employer must provide a workplace free of known health and safety hazards.
- If you have concerns, you have the right to speak up about them **without fear of retaliation**.
- Be trained in a language you understand
- Work on machines that are safe
- Be protected from toxic chemicals
- Request an OSHA inspection, and speak to the inspector
- Report an injury or illness, and get copies of your medical records
- See copies of the workplace injury and illness log
- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses
- Get copies of test results done to find hazards in the workplace

# WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Read the OSHA poster
- Follow employers' safety and health rules and wear or use all required gear and equipment
- Follow safe work practices for your job, as directed by your employer
- Report hazardous conditions to a supervisor or safety committee
- Report hazardous conditions to OSHA if employers do not fix them
- Cooperate with OSHA inspectors

See OSHA Workers' webpage <https://www.osha.gov/workers/index.html>

## WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS?

- Providing a safe and healthful workplace free of recognized hazards
- Following the OSHA standards
- Providing training, medical examinations and record keeping
- OSH Act gives rights, particularly during and after an OSHA inspection.

# HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS, INCIDENTS TO OSHA

If you, your co-workers and/or your union representative determine that an OSHA inspection is needed to get workplace hazards corrected, you have several options.

- You can download the complaint form from OSHA's website, complete it and **mail** or **fax** it to OSHA at 215- 597-1956 or you can call 215-597-4955 to ask for a copy of the complaint form.
- You can file a complaint online at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).
- You can **phone** the regional office. The number is 215-597-4955.
- You can **visit** your regional or area office in Marlton NJ or Philadelphia to discuss your concerns.
- Note that if a hazard is life-threatening, call the Regional or local office or 1-800-321-OSHA immediately.

**\* You do not have to be a U.S. citizen to file a complaint with OSHA. You can also tell OSHA not to reveal your name. OSHA will keep your name off the complaint, if you wish.**

# YOUR REPORT TO OSHA

- Can be in any language
- Can result in an investigation. If you want, you can ask OSHA to leave your name out of the complaint.
- Protects you from retaliation from your employer. Your employer is breaking the law if they react to your complaint by doing the following:

## PROTECTION FROM WORKPLACE RETALIATION (ADVERSE REACTION)

If you file a complaint with OSHA and your employer retaliates with the following actions, they will be breaking the law. The actions may include:

- Applying or issuing a policy which provides for an unfavorable personnel action due to activity protected by a whistleblower law enforced by OSHA.
- Blacklisting
- Demoting
- Denying overtime or promotion
- Disciplining
- Denying benefits
- Failing to hire or rehire
- Firing or laying off
- Intimidation
- Making threats
- Reassignment to a less desirable position, including on adversely affecting prospects for promotion
- Reducing pay or hours
- suspension

# WHAT TO DO IF YOUR EMPLOYER RETALIATES

The OSH Act protects workers who complain to their employer, OSHA or other government agencies about unsafe or unhealthful working conditions in the workplace or environmental problems.

You cannot be transferred, denied a raise, have your hours reduced, be fired, or punished in any other way because you used any right given to you under the OSH Act.

If you have been punished or discriminated against for using your rights, you **must file a complaint with OSHA within 30 days** of the alleged reprisal for most complaints. No form is required but you must send a letter or call the OSHA Area office nearest you to report the discrimination.

You have a limited right under the OSH Act to refuse to do a job because conditions are hazardous. You may do so under the OSH Act only when 1) you believe that you face death or serious injury and the situation is so clearly hazardous that any reasonable person would believe the same thing; 2) you have tried where possible, to get your employer to correct the condition and been unable to obtain a correction and there is no other way to do the job safely; 3) the situation is so urgent that you do not have time to eliminate the hazard through regulatory channels such as calling OSHA.

## OSHA OFFICES NEAR YOU:

- **Philadelphia Area Office (Pennsylvania)**

The Wanamaker Building  
100 Penn Square East, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107  
Phone: (215) 597-4955  
Fax: (215) 597-1956

- **Marlton Executive Park, Building 2**

701 Route 73 South, Suite 120  
Marlton, New Jersey 08053  
Phone: (856) 596-5200  
Fax: (856) 596-5201



# OSHA EMERGENCY HOTLINE

## 1-800-321-OSHA (6742)

- Report a workplace hazard
- Request information on OSHA
- Request an OSHA publication

This material was produced under grant number SH29657SH6 from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Training materials developed with grant funds will be posted at <http://www.osha.gov/dte/library>

## CREDITS AND INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

- Provincial Health Services Authority: An Ergonomics Guide for Hospital Laundries
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): Ergonomics in The Laundry/Linen Industry
- OSHA Fact Sheet: Your Rights as a Whistleblower

This material was produced under grant number SH29657SH6 from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Training materials developed with grant funds will be posted at <http://www.osha.gov/dte/library>