



**INSTITUTE
FOR
CAREGIVER
EDUCATION**

In-Service Training

Good Body Mechanics/ Employee Safety: A Skills Update

THIS PROGRAM COVERS:

- 1) Definition of **Ergonomics**
- 2) How Repetitive Movements Can Lead to Injury
- 3) The Basic Steps to Using Good Body Mechanics
- 4) How to Maintain Healthy Lifestyle Habits to Help Prevent Injury

This program can be used by the instructor to provide classroom instruction with participant handouts or it can allow for self-study/independent study.

NOTE: This topic takes approximately 20 minutes.

The goal of this program is to provide all employees in a long term care nursing home with an understanding of basic body movements that will help to prevent work-related injuries. The program also explains the relationship between healthy lifestyle behaviors and employee safety.

**A—Instructor's
Teaching Outline**

**B—Participant
Handout for
Instructor-led
Training**

**C—Self-Paced
Learning Module**

**D—In-service
Quiz**

E—Answer Key

Instructor's Teaching Outline—Section A

OBJECTIVES:

Upon successful completion of this program the health care worker will be able to:

1. Define the meaning of **ergonomics**.
2. Explain how repetitive movements can lead to injury over time.
3. Demonstrate basic steps to using good body mechanics with lifts and transfers.
4. Explain how maintaining healthy lifestyle habits can help to prevent injury.



Self-Paced Learning Module—Section C

INSTRUCTIONS

READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON GOOD BODY MECHANICS: A SKILLS UPDATE, AND THEN DO THE POST-QUIZ INCLUDED IN THE SELF-PACED LEARNING PACKET.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Most work-related injuries are preventable if a person maintains good physical condition, understands basic body mechanics, and practices proper techniques with lifts and transfers. Do you agree with this statement?

II. ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics is the study of body mechanics. It studies the physiologic limitations of body movement and what factors contribute to musculoskeletal disorders. It evaluates what factors contribute to repetitive stress injuries, and what changes can be made in the workplace to protect employees from developing such work-related injuries. Charles Jeffress, who heads the federal agency Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) stated that, “Science is clear that the more you repeat a motion, the more likely you are to get hurt - though the number of repetitions for each person may be different.”

There are significant up-front **expenses** that an employer would incur in order to make the workplace more “worker friendly.” This includes purchasing equipment such as mechanical and stand-up lifts; desks and chairs at a comfortable height for computer monitor and keyboard, and good back support; beds that raise and lower easily; carts on wheels designed so that workers do not have to hoist heavy bags up over a cart rim to load or unload; work tables at adjustable heights that minimize chronic musculoskeletal strain.

However, it is calculated that **savings** in the long term would be more than double the up-front expenses. Savings are due to fewer work-related injuries, medical expenses, time lost from work, and workers’ compensation, etc. **What things are in your work space that you recognize as being “worker friendly?” *What changes might you suggest that would make your work space more worker friendly? (You might report these suggestions to your safety committee representative.)*



III. HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS THAT HELP PREVENT INJURY

- Use your mind and body together to make the most of what you've got.
- Engage in regular exercise that maintains strength and flexibility. Staying in shape requires aerobic exercise to get all your muscles working together, improves your blood flow, speeds up your metabolism to burn up more calories, and boosts your energy. The exercise should last a minimum of 20-30 minutes at least 3 times per week. Employees work hard, but they don't necessarily get the proper kind of exercise. **What types of exercise would you recommend that would support this healthy lifestyle habit? *What kinds of exercise do you do? *Do you have exercise equipment in your home? *Do you use it?!*



Principles for Reducing the Risk of Work-Related Injuries

- Keep your work **close to your body**. - This is the most basic principle of good body mechanics. **Try holding something heavy out in front of you. How does it feel?*
- Maintain your whole body in **good alignment**. Transferring residents from bed to chair or vice versa can be the most dangerous activity because there is a tendency to bend at the waist and twist at the same time.
- An employee who has to engage in **repetitive movements** over time is particularly at risk for work-related injury. If a person must do this, it is recommended that he relaxes and exercises those body parts that are held in a constant position for 5 minutes every hour.

- **Back support belts**, generally speaking, do not prevent injury. They tend to give a person a false sense of security, perhaps thinking that one can lift or carry something that is heavier than should be carried. The key principle is to use **good body mechanics**. This includes:



- **Bend at the knees** instead of the waist. The thigh muscles are larger in mass than either the buttocks or back muscles.
- **Get close** to the object to be lifted.
- **Keep your back straight.**
- **Position feet to provide a good base of support.**
- **Hold objects close to your body** when lifting and carrying.
- **Keep body in straight alignment.** - Don't twist at the waist.
- **Push, pull or slide** rather than lift whenever possible. Pushing is better than pulling because you are using your whole body weight rather than just 1 or 2 muscle groups.



- Back support belts may be worn but should only be secured around your waist when lifting or transferring. Otherwise they can be left hanging loosely by suspender straps from your shoulders. When worn secured they tend to weaken back and abdominal muscles over time, putting a person at greater risk for injury.



- **Encourage the resident to participate** as much as possible; this helps the resident to maintain muscle strength, and eases your burden as well.
- **Gait belts** are excellent to use when:
 - Assisting a resident with transfer who can support at least 50% of his own weight. It should never be used to lift a resident; rather its use is to guide the resident forward as he stands by pushing up with his hands on chair arm or grab bar and balances his weight on his feet.
 - Assisting a resident with restorative ambulation. It supports a somewhat unsteady resident by having control of movement at the center of his body. It also protects from injury to both the resident and caregiver if there should be a sudden jerky movement. If a resident starts to fall, the gait belt helps to break the fall and the resident can be eased down to the floor if necessary by sliding down the caregiver's leg.
- **Maintain healthy lifestyle habits.**
 - Get **proper rest**.
 - Eat a **well-balanced diet**: low in fat and sweets, and high in fruits, grains, and vegetables. (*It is hard when you are busy and tired to plan ahead and resist fast foods.*)



- **Exercise** regularly (at least 20-30 minutes 3 times a week).
 - **Smoking** - What can one say? There is **nothing** good to say about it.
 - **Alcohol or drugs** - Put a person at greater risk for injuries of all kinds.
- Know your body and how it works. Each body is unique and you know better than anyone what works best for you. Practice healthy life-style behaviors to prevent work-related injury and promote optimal health and well-being.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is far easier to prevent injuries than it is to fix them after they occur. It is the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe, “work-friendly” environment. It is the responsibility of employees to use good body mechanics and maintain healthy life-style habits to help prevent injury. Remember - it is much better to prevent injury than to try to repair what has been injured.



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Mission

The Institute for Caregiver Education fosters the highest quality of life for elders and caregivers through cultural transformation and professional development.

The Institute values...

- Life-long learning
- Dignity and diversity
- Teamwork
- Individual responsibility
- Clinical excellence
- A sense of community
- Continuous Program Improvement

THE INSTITUTE FOR CAREGIVER EDUCATION'S FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES OF CULTURE CHANGE

Culture Change is a transformational philosophy that seeks to provide care to elders through a community model of care. Delivery of care focuses on placing the person before the task, empowering caregivers to develop relationships with residents and each other.

The Institute Team has identified 5 Core Principles of Culture Change to aid in the understanding of this philosophy: CHOICE, COMMUNITY, RESPECT, RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT.

The principle of COMMUNITY is primary in supporting good body mechanics and the safety of employees as well as residents. A primary goal of Culture Change is the ability of homes to evolve from a hospital-like environment to a true community. The phrase, "Would I do this in my own home?" should never be far from your thoughts. Along with medical care, residents' social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and cultural needs should receive equal attention. Staff should be viewed as complete individuals versus the more traditional view of identifying workers with the tasks they perform.

- Educate direct care staff and all workers to understand that proper body mechanics and injury prevention are priorities.
- Encourage staff members to work interdependently, requesting assistance as needed to reduce the risk of personal injury and to promote the health and safety of all members of the community.
- Empower team members, residents and families to arrange the resident's room to provide a safe working environment and so that residents can easily access personal items and safely transfer into and out of bed, wheelchairs, etc.
- Team members and residents can decide how to arrange items in common areas so that adequate space is available to accommodate residents' wheelchairs, walkers, and other ambulatory aids.
- Encourage residents to participate in activities designed to focus on manipulative skills and hand-eye coordination.

For more information on how you can begin to incorporate Culture Change values into your program, please call Annette Sanders, President, at (717) 263-7766.