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ERGO TIMES



Back pain? Work it out!

A publication (2010) from the Institute for Work & Health (IWH) called "So your back hurts..." provides some useful insights for workers managing back pain. It's a great primer for all of us as we approach the hazards of winter's last snow banks, and new spring sporting activities. Here's what the IWH experts have to say:

1. When you experience an episode of severe back pain, you probably think that something is **seriously wrong**, and you worry that you'll be disabled for life. You should see a doctor to rule out anything ominous, but "in most cases, there is probably nothing seriously wrong with you."
2. **Bed rest** can do more harm than good. We've known this for a long time, but the instinct to "nest" when you're in pain is very strong. "Stay as active as possible, even if moving around is painful. This will help you feel better sooner."

3. Get **back to work** as soon as you can, *before* you feel completely well. Your employer will modify your job to allow you to come back from a work-related injury. (Ergonomists can help with this!) Staying home will only make your muscles weaker, reducing your tolerance for everyday activities.
4. You almost certainly don't need an **x-ray**. X-rays show only bone, and your pain is likely related to injury to the muscles, joints, or ligaments.
5. Your pain will **almost certainly improve within days** or weeks, *even if you don't get treatment*. Treatment does not "cure" back pain; it only helps you control the pain and let you get back to normal activities sooner.
6. **Treatments** that have been shown to help with pain include: staying active, non-prescription pain relievers or muscle relaxants, spinal manipulation, heat, and massage. Bed rest *delays* recovery.

Ergonomists are involved primarily in prevention; we help companies to improve work design so that people won't suffer from back injuries. We are also involved in accommodating injured workers who have suffered a back injury, helping them to get back to work quickly and safely. We are an important link between the worker and the employer, when it comes to managing and preventing workplace musculoskeletal injury.

Back pain is one of the top five reasons that people visit their doctors.



Our mission:

Inspiring, building, and supporting partnership between your organisation and our innovative team to advance ergonomics

Our team:

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All of our ergonomists are members of:



ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN ERGONOMISTS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE D'ERGONOMIE



Warehouse blitz

Industrial warehousing is the Ontario Ministry of Labour's blitz target for February and March.

Much of what they are looking for will fall under the realm of traditional safety (racking, forklift safety, pedestrian safety, etc.), but they will undoubtedly also be looking at MSD hazards. Have you reviewed the MSD risks in your warehouse? An ergonomist can evaluate manual handling demands, and work with you to identify solutions that will reduce the risks. One of our recent projects involved the evaluation of some alternative **rack designs** to allow better access to cases on a pallet. We compared tilting the pallet, raising the pallet, rotating the pallet, and allowing clearance at one or both sides of the pallet to improve access. We've also been doing some interesting work in the area of optimising **job rotation**, so that jobs are equalized, and no one warehouse job is a "high risk" hot spot.

Warehouses also typically involve a lot of **driving**, and much of it often in **reverse**. Are your drivers complaining of chronic low back pain? Neck pain? This is, unfortunately, an area where a safety solution contributes to an MSD hazard. You need to drive backwards when you can't see over the load on your forks. But backwards driving involves twisted neck and back postures. If a driver spends 50% of the shift with his/her forks loaded with tall loads, s/he could be in that twisted position for 4 or more hours a day! We've also done quite a lot of work with drivers in the past few months. We can also **evaluate driving demands**, and help you to **optimise the layout of the warehouse**, or your warehouse practices, to minimise backwards driving. We can help with "**sit fit**" assessments, where we help drivers to optimise their adjustment in the driving compartment.

More warehouse-ergo resources...

We can also provide training for your workers to ensure that they are able to use the safest manual handling techniques available. We recently developed a highly customized **train-the-trainer** program to teach some tricky best practices for wrenching. The feedback was great!

Consider using our one-day lifting tips train-the-trainer to get you started with your own in-house training. This program provides coaching plans for 15 lifting tips, which you customise so that you're teaching your employees to lift the stuff that they actually lift in the workplace. The course begins with the facilitator teaching the 15 tips, and then we introduce the coaching plans. Each participant selects a tip to customise and deliver back to the group. After the training, the participants can integrate their own workplace lifting conditions so that the tips are taught with relevance. For

example, in the course we learn how to "lift half the load at a time". In the construction industry, a ladder dolly would be an excellent application of this tip. Having workers experience the difference between lifting/carrying a ladder, and lifting the end of the ladder and pulling it, would be very insightful!

Alternatively, we can customise the program and deliver the training to your workers. Our ergonomist spends a day or two (depending whether we've done work with you before) working with your employees to identify appropriate applications for each tip that applies in your industry. We photograph the tip, as well as the more hazardous option (using "stunt" employees, of course, since we know your employees would never use an unsafe technique!). These photos, and objects that are common in your workplace, are integrated into the training. The course always includes practice and feedback so we know that participants are really learning what it feels like to lift safely. The course is typically 4 hours in duration, but we can develop longer or shorter programs on request.



Brain-stretcher for today

Maintenance Access chamber covers (aka "manhole covers") weigh over a hundred pounds. Why are they round (not square, triangular, or

rectangular)? The main reason relates to the safety of those above and below.

The round shape actually has several benefits, some of which could be considered "ergonomic". (The answer can be found on our website!)

Check out our store!

If you are looking for ways to increase employee engagement with your ergo program, we offer many "ergo" products, such as travel tumblers, grocery bags, clip boards, lunch bags, water bottles, and posters on four different topics.

Volume discounts are available, and credit card purchases are welcome.

Online course registration is also now available.



Newsletter updates...

In an effort to control our mailing costs, we will issue 4 newsletters and one calendar per year. No issue will be released in July/August. However, we will be adding to our blog often (see www.taylorergo.com/blog). New and older newsletters are also available on the "resources" page of our website at www.taylorergo.com/resources.

Save a tree: We're happy to send you a hard copy if you prefer to read from paper, but we also distribute the newsletter electronically. Let us know if you prefer an email notice instead of paper mail.

Keep us in the loop: If your mailing address is incorrect, please let us know by emailing (info@taylorergo.com or faxing (519 632 7469) a correction. We'll enter you into a sweatshirt draw.

Pass it along: Please send the newsletter along to a colleague, post it on your safety board, take it home for your family, or leave it in your lunch room. When everyone is done with it, please recycle!



Ergo cooks

We held our holiday staff party at Relish Cooking Studio in Kitchener this year. (<http://www.relishcookingstudio.com/>) Our team and significant others enjoyed an evening of cooking, followed by consuming our culinary accomplishments! We surprised ourselves with our skills on a challenging menu of butternut squash soup with roasted red pepper purée, grilled duck breast with blackberry honey, double stuffed salt crusted baked potatoes, and gingerbread trifles with caramelized apples and cranberries. Delicious!

Does it seem to you, from the photo, that we may have enjoyed the “coaching” part of the experience as much as the “cooking”? (How did we manage to get all of the boys on the “working” side of the counter?)



Free Ergo Speaker

If your professional association is looking for a speaker on an “ergo” topic, please contact Carrie. We would be happy to come out to speak with human resources professionals, safety professionals, disability managers, production managers, or engineers! (Of course, we’re hoping that people might ask about our services, too.) If you are within an hour radius of one of our offices, we can probably come at no charge!



MOL's “Healthy and Safety Ontario Workplaces”

In December, 2013, the Ministry of Labour published their “Strategy for Transforming Occupational Health and Safety” (<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pdf/strategy.pdf>). We read the document eagerly, hoping for something to hold out to our clients as evidence of why they needed to pursue ergonomics in earnest. After all, as the MOL’s website (http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/ergonomics/is_ergonomics.php) also points out, 43% of all injuries are strain/sprains, and how else can we reduce the risk of MSD?

Here’s what we found.

- In the entire document, ergonomics is not even mentioned once. In fairness, the document doesn’t talk a lot about specific hazards or interventions, and so the absence of our favourite word in itself might not be disappointing. However...
- In section 7, the goal of “targeting the areas of greatest need” is described essentially as providing service to vulnerable workers, small business, and “highest hazards”. “Ah, ha!” we think, “Here’s where they’ll talk about ergo.” And indeed, the term “musculoskeletal disorders” is used once in this section. “High hazards” are described as a greater frequency or severity of work-related injuries, illnesses and/or fatalities. The action steps that are planned to deal with “highest hazards” are:
 - a. Improve use of data, info, and research to identify activities with high risk.
 - b. Co-ordinate resources on conditions of work with highest rates of injury/illness/fatalities. They mention more advisory committee work, awareness campaigns, and enforcement in non-compliant workplaces.
 - c. Develop rigorous training standards

The “activities” in this section address falls from heights, mental stress, and asbestos. I can imagine how research, coordinated resources, and training could work towards MSD hazard reduction, but it’s not at all clear from this document that this is a focus. As always, MSDs, although they cost more than any other hazard, can’t compete for attention with traumatic injuries and fatalities. No ergonomist would argue that MSD prevention should take priority over preventing fatalities and other serious injury. However, surely the costs of MSDs should offset some investment into prevention!

One intriguing component of the plan is their planned campaign to “significantly reduce public tolerance of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities.” They cite the effectiveness of this strategy in changing behaviours like smoking, seatbelt use, and impaired driving. I think it will be challenging (but very rewarding) to change the perception of MSDs, and to create a culture where people don’t consider chronic low back pain, or tendonitis to be “just a part of the job.” I can’t wait to see the ads on TV!

Talk to us through our blog!

If you haven’t visited our website lately, you’ve missed our blog articles on the following topics:

- Why we need to innovate
- Cold stress and the “work warm up” schedule
- How to improve the quality of your sleep
- A 10-second demo of what ergo is all about
- A human exo-skeleton shown on “TEDTalks”



MSD Hazard Identification April 9, 2014, in Cambridge

This one-day course will help participants to use the Ontario MSD Prevention Guidelines tools. This is a great course for your ergo team or JHSC.

You will learn to:

- Use key tools included in the MSD Prevention Guidelines Tool Box, such as **discomfort surveys, feedback surveys, workplace inspection checklists, computer work station checklists, and more.** (Course includes a copy of the MSD Prevention Guidelines.)
- Effectively use the **risk assessment checklist.** This will include learning to quantify and evaluate force, awkward posture, and repetitive movements.
- Identify when and how an **in-depth risk assessment** should be done.
- Set an action plan for **implementing** the MSD Prevention Guidelines in your workplace.

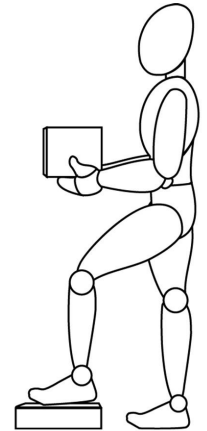
(Note that MSD Hazard Control, another one-day course coming on May 20, is an excellent follow-up to this workshop!)

Physical Demands Description May 7-8, 2014, in Cambridge

This two-day session will allow participants, including ergo co-op students, nurses, safety coordinators, and return-to-work coordinators, to collect data and write a concise physical demands description report for the WSIB, employee's doctor or physiotherapist, or for internal company use.

You will learn to:

- Identify a **primary job objective.**
- Discriminate between **essential** and non-essential duties.
- Use tools to measure **force, posture, and repetition.** (Course includes a spring scale, stop watch, clip board, and tape measure!)
- Learn to take **photos** effectively. (Bring a digital camera from your facility, or use one from our class set.)
- Measure and document **workstation** parameters.
- Describe environmental, sensory, and mobility demands.
- Write a **concise physical demands description report** including a summary of the "functional requirements" that matches the WSIB's FAF form.
- Validate** the report, obtaining worker and management verification.



ONLINE registration and payment are now available at www.taylordergo.com.

To register manually, complete and fax this page to 519 623 9164, with your purchase order number, or mail it with a cheque to Taylor'd Ergonomics, 38 Water Street South, Cambridge, ON N1R 3C5. Your registration will be **confirmed by fax or email, 1-2 weeks before the course.** Register early, as space is limited. Cancellations within one week of the workshop will be subject to a \$100 charge, although substitutions are welcome at any time.

Name(s): _____

Company: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

e-mail: _____

P.O.# _____ (if no PO, please send cheque with registration)

Please register me for the:

MSD Hazard ID course on April 9, \$355+hst

PDD course on May 7-8, \$775+hst

HST#89765 6377



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