

# What is ergonomics?

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“Ergonomics” is the art & science of designing with workers in mind. Our goal is to ‘fit the task to the worker’.

## What does an ergonomist do?

The ergonomist at your facility may complete physical demands descriptions of jobs, conduct ergo assessments to evaluate the risk of strain/sprain injuries, work with the company to develop solutions to ergonomics concerns, provide training, or help to bring injured workers back to work safely. If you have questions, please ask!

## What training does an ergonomist have?

Most ergonomists have a kinesiology or human kinetics background, although some come from other areas. Since 1999, ergonomists in Canada have been certified by the Canadian College for the Certification of Professional Ergonomists. Full certification requires a relevant degree and at least three years of full time experience, including a year of “mentored” work.

## Why use ergonomics?

Ergonomics has many benefits. The primary goal of most ergonomics programs is to lower the risk of strain/sprain injuries by reducing risk factors. Additional benefits include:

- improved comfort, morale, quality, productivity, and efficiency
- reduced accidents, absenteeism, injuries, and errors

## What is a risk factor?

Any feature of a job that has a potentially harmful effect on the worker. A risk factor for hearing loss would be noise exposure.

## What are the risk factors for strain/sprain injuries?



### **Awkward posture**

Body positions with the joints bent are typically considered ‘awkward postures’.



### **High force**

Force is a measure of the amount of effort required to perform a task.



### **Repetition**

Repetition refers to repeating the

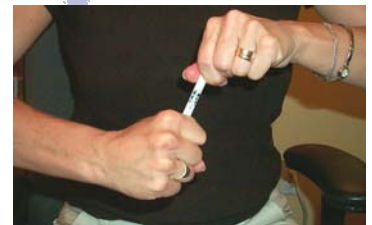
same movement or type of movement over and over again.

Note that these risk factors usually act together to create injuries. One risk factor on its own is rarely a problem.

## Try this:

This short exercise will help you understand the benefits of ergonomics. You’ll need a pen or pencil.

Hold the pen in a “power” grip, as shown in the photo at the right. Squeeze it as hard as you can. Try to remove it with your other hand. Can you?



Now hold the pen with your wrist bent, using only your fingertips and thumb. Can you remove the pen with your other hand? Probably! How long could you hold this position?



When you work in awkward postures, your muscles are not as strong. By improving ergonomics, people can do the same work with less effort, and less pain.

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