

Avoiding Sprains and Strains In Restaurants

Sprains and strains of muscles and tendons are common among food service workers, often caused by improper lifting and repetitive motions. However, with proper training and open communication, many of these injuries can be avoided.

Four steps to proper lifting

1. Size up the load

- Use a hand truck if possible
- Get help if you need it
- Check for splinters, nails, exposed staples
- Use gloves if necessary
- Make sure you have a clear path before trying to lift heavy objects
- Never lift anything unless you know where you're going to put it down

2. Lift

- Bring the load as close to you as possible before lifting
- Keep your head up, your back straight and bend at your knees and hips
- Lift with your legs, not your back

3. Move

- Keep the load close to your body
- Look where you are going
- Shift your feet to turn, don't twist

4. Get set and lower

- When setting a load down, let your leg muscles carry it down
- Make certain your fingers and toes are clear before setting the load down

Clean-up tasks

Be aware of all potential hazards when performing clean-up tasks such as washing dishes, clearing tables, mopping floors, and emptying garbage.

These tasks often involve repetitive reaching, overreaching, and lifting, which can lead to neck and back strains and sprains, especially if tasks are performed while assuming awkward postures.

Reduce lifting during garbage removal by using garbage handling bags with wheels or garbage cans with wheels.

Limit the size of garbage containers to limit the weight of the load employees must lift and dump.

Install dumpsters at or below grade level.

Rearrange work spaces so it is easier to reach for supplies used routinely and to prevent over-reaching and awkward back, shoulder and wrist postures.

Vary repetitive tasks by spacing out activities.

Lower rinse nozzle in the wash sink to rest at mid-body height to reduce overreaching

Limit size of dirty dish containers to reduce the amount of dirty dishes that can be stacked and carried at one time. If possible, carts should be provided to put dirty dish containers on, to decrease the distance that workers have to carry heavy containers. Employees should also be warned not to overfill containers, or they will have to lift and carry excessive weight.