

Kitchen and hospitality staff experience awkward positions and repetitive tasks daily. Ergonomic principles can be applied to work tasks to reduce stresses on the body and the potential for injury while at work.

Our bodies function best in a neutral position. When moving in the kitchen, we frequently encounter awkward positions. Examples include standing for long periods, reaching overhead, reaching below the knees, twisting, grasping for prolonged periods, reaching across wide counters, exerting force in a downward motion, and lifting hot and heavy pots. Staff should follow these tips to reduce exposure:

- Reduce your reach. Keep your work close to your body.
- Tilt bins or boxes toward you.
- Store frequently used items between shoulder and hip height.
- Position frequently used items close to the work area at a convenient height.
- Use a cart to move items, when possible, to eliminate carrying them.
- Perform light work (e.g., decorating cakes, pastries, and candies) at or slightly above elbow height.
- Complete forceful tasks (e.g., chopping, kneading, cutting) at or slightly below waist height.
- Turn your entire body when reaching for and retrieving items to avoid twisting your back.
- Wear shoes with cushioning, support, and anti-slip treads. Replace shoes or insoles when worn.
- Use anti-fatigue mats or shift weight between legs to reduce stress on the back. Try alternating placement of feet on a step or rail when standing for long periods.
- Choose the correct tool for the job. Select utensils with good grips and comfortable handles that allow a whole hand power grip to reduce grip force, pinching, and awkward postures.
- Keep knives sharp to decrease the amount of cutting force. Store them on a magnetic strip or keep them in a knife block. Do not keep them laying in a drawer.
- Take frequent microbreaks. Let muscles relax and periodically move in the opposite direction of the position you've been working in. For example, if you've been looking down to decorate a cake, stretch your neck and stretch your arms over your head.
- When performing repetitive tasks, vary the tasks by using different muscle groups or pace yourself.

