

Understanding Ergonomics at Work (Part 5 of 5)

What can I do if I think I have identified an ergonomic problem?

- Look for likely causes and consider possible solutions. A minor alteration may be all that is necessary to make a task easier and safer to perform. For example:
 - provide height-adjustable chairs so individual operators can work at their preferred work height
 - remove obstacles from under desks to create sufficient leg room
 - arrange items stored on shelving so those used most frequently and those that are the heaviest are between waist and shoulder height
 - raise platforms to help operators reach badly located controls
 - change shift work patterns
 - introduce job rotation between different tasks to reduce physical and mental fatigue
- Talk to employees and get them to suggest ideas and discuss possible solutions. Involve employees from the start of the process - this will help all parties to accept any proposed changes.
- Always make sure that any alterations are properly evaluated by the people who do the job. Be careful that a change introduced to solve one problem does not create difficulties elsewhere.
- You don't always need to consult ergonomics professionals, and the expense of making changes can often be kept low. However, you may need to ask a qualified ergonomist if you are unable to find a straightforward solution or if a problem is complex.
- HSE has published a range of guidance material, some of which is free. Aimed at employers and employees, this guidance provides help on how to achieve safe and healthy work environments. It includes practical evaluation checklists and advice.
- Good ergonomics sense makes good economic sense. Ergonomics input does not necessarily involve high costs, and can save money in the long term by reducing injuries and absence from work.

An understanding of ergonomics in your workplace can improve your daily work routine. It is possible to eliminate aches, pains, and stresses at work and improve job satisfaction. Ergonomic solutions can be simple and straightforward to make even small changes such as altering the height of a chair can make a considerable difference.