

Protect Yourself From Overuse Injuries

You'll hear about **strategies to avoid hand and arm overuse injuries**.

Injury risk is increased by tasks involving repetitive motions, high or prolonged muscle exertion, and awkward postures.

Some examples are drawing up meds into syringes, typing at a computer, or using a bar-code scanner.

Symptoms of these injuries include pain, swelling, and tingling...from tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, bursitis, or other damage to muscles, nerves, tendons, etc.

Be aware that overuse injuries occur over time...so it's key to protect yourself, even if you don't currently have symptoms.

Incorporate preventive strategies into your workflow.

Find ways to vary the muscles you use...such as alternating hands, rotating the work you do during your shift, or switching up the position you work (compounding, delivery, etc), if possible.

Pause for 20 to 60 seconds about every 20 minutes...to lessen fatigue and to stretch. Set an alarm for yourself if needed.

Also stretch for a couple minutes during scheduled breaks.

For example, move your arms and legs for 20 to 30 seconds...then stretch muscles you've been using and hold the stretches to a comfortable degree for 20 to 30 seconds at a time.

Address any potentially problematic devices or equipment.

For instance, avoid unnecessary use of large syringes for sterile compounding...since they can require the most force.

Ask your admin if resources are available...such as a specialist to perform ergonomic assessments of work areas or a health coach who can demonstrate helpful practices for your team.

But keep in mind that you can also make improvements yourself.

For example, ensure the top of your computer monitor is just above eye level...and your workstation is about elbow level.

And avoid pressing your elbows or wrists onto hard surfaces. If needed, use a wrist rest, keyboard tray, document holder, etc.

Be sure to emphasize these strategies when training new hires...to reduce the risk of lost work time and staff turnover.

If you have symptoms, tell your supervisor. They can help find ways to address work-related issues.

Key References:

-Int J Pharm Compd 2021;25(3):182-6

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