

FACT SHEET

Protect Your Hands, Wrists and Arms... What could you do without them?

Whose Hands, Wrists and Arms Are At Risk of Injury?

Anyone working with their hands - assemblers, manual material handlers, office workers, hospitality servers, health care workers, data entry clerks or skilled trades. In short, almost anyone that works with their hands. Those who do repetitive, forceful work with their hands, wrists or arms in awkward postures are at risk. This also includes those with daily exposure to vibrating power tools and equipment powered by electricity, gas or compressed air and used by the hands.



Why Do Your Hands, Wrists and Arms Hurt?

Your hands, wrists and arms hurt because of poor ergonomic design of the workplace. This includes poor physical design of the workstation layout, tools, equipment, parts, materials and the environment. Many job designs do not consider different design requirements that exist for age, gender, dexterity, or ethnicity. In fact, most who do ergonomically design jobs do so based on old U.S. military data based on healthy and young males from 18-24 years old. Everyday many left-handed workers work with workstations and equipment designed for right handed people which can also pose a greater safety risk.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF TROUBLE

- ⇒ Pain, Numbness and/or Tingling
- ⇒ Loss of sensation to touch or pain
- ⇒ Discoloration of hands or finger tips
- ⇒ Swelling and/or Inflammation

DON'T IGNORE THE SYMPTOMS!

BEWARE!

Your work can damage the muscles, ligaments and tendons of your hands, wrists and arms. In addition, your work can impact the circulation of blood to these same areas. You can hurt these structures in a number of ways;

- ✓ Exerting large forces with your hands such as gripping, handling, pulling, pushing (such as when making electrical connections or inserting push pins)
- ✓ Working with them in poor postures, bent wrists, blind tasks with hands Working on highly repetitive tasks
- ✓ Working in cold or getting cold blow off from tools and equipment
- ✓ Working with poorly designed power tools, or improper tools for tasks
- ✓ Working with the hands, wrists and arms in constant contact with other objects causing added stress (such as working over parts to perform your job, leaning on arm or wrist rests)
- ✓ Working without sufficient rest

Unifor and Ergonomics:

Ergonomics is the science involved in designing work so that it accommodates the worker. As a union, Unifor is at the forefront in the field of ergonomics by:

- ✓ Working with health and safety and ergonomics committees to convince employers to change the workplace, work station, tools and work organization to prevent injuries
- ✓ Bargaining ergonomic language in our contracts
- ✓ Bargaining ergonomic expertise at the National, Regional and plant levels
- ✓ Bargaining paid time away from the job to give our bodies and minds the rest they need and deserve
- ✓ Designing and providing ergonomic training for our reps and membership
- ✓ Leading the push for Ergonomic Regulations both provincially and nationally.

How to Learn More:

You can learn more about your hands, wrists and arms or Ergonomics by contacting:

Unifor Health and Safety Department
205 Placer Court, Toronto, ON M2H 3H9

Tel: (416) 495-6558 or

1-800-268-5763

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