Ergonomics is a multidisciplinary science that combines elements of comfort and safety in order to reduce stress and eliminate injuries caused by the workplace environment. The goal of ergonomics involves “fitting” the job to the employee to increase productivity, efficiency, and quality of work.

How does ergonomics affect me?
Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are one of the leading causes of lost or restricted work time. MSDs are injuries affecting muscles, nerves, and tendons. They can emerge from a variety of risk factors or work conditions, such as:

- Poor body mechanics
- Repetitive tasks
- Restrictive work stations
- Lifting heavy or awkward objects
- Forceful exertions

Examples of possible injuries from these work conditions include the following:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tendinitis
- Lower back injuries
- Muscle strains

How can I prevent work-related MSDs?
Evaluate and self-adjust your workstation first by following Steps 1 and 2. If unsuccessful or unsatisfactory, go to Step 3 to request an ergonomic evaluation of your work area.

Ergonomic Evaluations

Self evaluation
Complete an online self-evaluation at https://srm.usc.edu/rmcsapps/ergoselfevalsys/.

Implement self-adjustments
Receive results via email and make recommended self-adjustments.

In-person evaluation (if necessary)
Request an in-person evaluation from an Occupational Therapist if self-adjustments are unsatisfactory.

For more information, contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at injuryprevention@usc.edu.

What You Can Do...

- Become knowledgeable of the common signs of stress. This may include irregular stiffness/pain, decreased range of motion, swelling.
- Report any MSD symptoms or risk factors to your supervisor.

References

NIOSH Workplace Safety & Health Topics: Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorders
http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/

OSHA Safety and Health Topics: Ergonomics
https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/