

Recommendations for Food Service Workers

Rules for Tools: To reduce the risk of injury, follow these recommendations:

- Use proper tools for the job.
- Keep shears and knives sharp. Use a professional knife sharpener.
- Use choppers, processors, and blenders to reduce repetitive motion and force.
- Try oversized molded and padded grips on knives and other tools to reduce hand fatigue. However, if these alternatives are not easy to grip and hold, use a tool that fits your hand.
- Angled and pistol grip handles on knives are advised for cuts made with a downward stroke. Such knives keep the wrist in neutral while allowing for sufficient downward force to make a smooth cut. Inline handles are best when the food is resting flat on a tabletop and the cut is to be made parallel to the surface.
- Handles should: a) be perpendicular to the line of action, b) be as long as the length of the palm, c) have a non-slip surface, d) be thick enough to allow a power grip (i.e., a grip that keeps the wrist straight), e) be textured to improve grip and hand force, and f) be washable in warm water to remove grease.
- Keep finger pinch to a minimum, especially for repetitive work.
- Avoid tools with form-fitting ridges for fingers on the handle unless they fit your hand perfectly. People with larger hands find that their fingers overlap the ridges causing pain, soreness and calluses. People with smaller hands have to spread their fingers to match the grooves. Strength testing has shown that spreading the fingers significantly reduces grip strength, requiring more pressure to maintain control of the tool.
- Heavy tools and cookware should have two handles.
- It is important to choose tools that minimize force and strain. Look for brands that have applied ergonomics principles in the design of their kitchen tools and gadgets.
- Workers can be exposed to hot kitchen environments where temperatures can reach 105 to 110 degrees while cooking in front of hot grills. Exposure to excessive heat may lead to heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and possible death.
- During the course of your day vary your activities.
- Avoid spending extended periods of time without a break or a change of activity.
- Conduct workplace exercise/stretching.
- Keep workstations neat. Unnecessary clutter makes it difficult to move around the work area easily and may cause you to perform awkward reaching and stretching.
- Hobbies, sports, and other home activities can present the same ergonomic concerns as work. Keep these same principals in mind at home as well as at work.

