

Editor: Jackie von Ogden  
Email: [Jackie@wcguru.com](mailto:Jackie@wcguru.com)  
Cell: 219-614-3987

## Ergonomics-As Easy as an Exercise Program?

Exercise. You either love or hate it. Many choose to implement a regular exercise program into their routine because they have to, it makes them feel better, they are under doctors orders, etc. And for those who struggle with an exercise regiment, you are not alone. You may have heard the old adage, “it takes 28 days to make a habit permanent”. Most of us recognize the importance of implementing a regular exercise program. Logically, you know the benefits of exercise. You know it can help with your health, and in turn can even make you feel better mentally. In fact, some statistics even claim that implementing and following a regular program can even spark the addition other healthy habits. So what does the concept of exercise have to do with ergonomics? Implementing an exercise program and implementing an ergonomics program may have more in common than you think.

Simply put, [UCLA Ergonomics](#) points out that “Ergonomics is the science of fitting jobs to people”. This simple definition is applicable within **any** industry. Unfortunately, in the past, many tended to think ergonomics was for “people in an office to sit properly”. This is not the case. Risk factors are relevant in almost any industry, and regardless of industry, proper implementation of an ergonomics program can benefit employees within any industry.

### Common Risk Factors Include:

- **Awkward body postures:** maintaining an awkward, unsupported or fixed posture such as bending, reaching or twisting for prolonged periods.
- **Excessive repetition:** doing the same motions repeatedly.
- **Excessive force:** physical exertion or pressure on any part of the body while lifting, pushing, pulling or gripping a tool.
- **Contact stress:** pressure by tools, edges or hard surfaces on soft tissues of the body. The palms and elbows are often at high risk.
- **Vibration:** using vibrating or impact tools and equipment.

Source: [UCLA Ergonomics: Common Ergonomic Risk Factors](#)

Do any of the above risk factors ring a bell for your employees, or within your place of employment? It may seem like common sense. Sort of like...exercising.

## You need an Ergonomics Program. Now What?

You have made the choice. You are aware of risks occurring with your employees. You have decided to make the change. Once a professional specializing in ergonomics has assessed your employee’s risks, you can then implement. Most of us know the importance of *having* ergonomic programs, *following* ergonomic programs and *updating* ergonomic programs. However, what many miss the boat on is the **communication and execution** of the program itself. Regardless of company size and industry, the fact

remains – in order for your ergonomics program to work, communication and implementation cannot be overlooked.

### **Communication of Implementation**

Why are you implementing your program? Were ergonomic issues causing injury? Looking to be proactive to reduce the possibility of injury occurring? Addressing the reasons behind the thought of implementation many times will answer your questions. Communicating the necessity of the program is vital. Communication is the key with implementation. Letting employees know the importance of the program and the reasons behind why this needs to occur may stop questions from arising. Additionally, the hesitation for conforming to the program may dissolve with this communication.

### **Execution**

Once the **why's** are communicated, the **how's** must be communicated as well. Talking about an ergonomics program (and its importance) is useless if you do not explain to your employee how the program will actually affect your employee(s) or the company itself. As [safecomputingtips.com](http://safecomputingtips.com) points out, the study of ergonomics exists to help improve the work life of people. Author Bo Pritchard continues to point out that the application of ergonomics improves the over all quality of life for most individuals and with applied techniques people may find their work comes easier.

Once the importance is communicated, it is time for the changes to take place. As with any new program, an evaluation should be done at regular intervals to allow for modifications to the program. Ergonomics professionals may need to be consulted for further review. In the end, explaining to your employees that an ergonomics program is “like a new exercise program” may not be the way to get people on board (especially those who hate to exercise). However, with proper communication and implementation, your ergonomics program may be a success.

### **References**

[UCLA Ergonomics](http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/What_and_Why.html)

[http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/What\\_and\\_Why.html](http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/What_and_Why.html)

[UCLA Ergonomics: Common Ergonomic Risk Factors](http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/What_and_Why.html)

[http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/What\\_and\\_Why.html](http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/What_and_Why.html)

[Safecomputingtips.com](http://www.safecomputingtips.com)

<http://www.safecomputingtips.com/articles/study-ergonomics.html>