

# Ergonomics Q&A

In honor of Ergonomics Month in October, we spoke with **Jonathan Dropkin, ScD, PT, CPE, Associate Professor and Faculty Ergonomist**, to learn more about how ergonomics plays an important role in promoting workplace health and safety.

**Q: What is the field of ergonomics?**

**A:** Ergonomics is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on designing work environments, jobs, equipment and work processes to fit the human body. Specifically, ergonomists evaluate how the work environment can be designed to fit the physical and cognitive abilities of the worker.

**Q: What are the key principles of ergonomics and how do you apply them in your work?**

**A:** As ergonomists, we focus on identifying and reducing occupational exposures in the workplace and redesigning the work environment with the workers' needs in mind. First and foremost, it is important to understand what types of occupational exposures can impact workers. Some examples are repetitive movement, force (physical exertion when performing a task such as lifting or moving heavy objects), as well as various physical exposures in the workplace, including hand-arm vibration from power tools, temperature, and lighting.

Exposure assessments are a core part of an ergonomist's job. There are a few different ways to do an exposure assessment – for example, a worker can self-report on what exposures they experience in the workplace. Ergonomists can also observe and evaluate the work environment to identify exposures. Once we identify the exposures, we work collaboratively with the worker and/or employer to create an action plan to reduce these exposures. This can include providing recommendations for redesigning workspaces, offering training and education, and establishing workplace health and safety programs.

**Q: What are the benefits of implementing ergonomic principles in the workplace?**

**A:** Ergonomics is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on designing work environments, jobs, equipment and work processes to fit the human body. Specifically, ergonomists evaluate how the work environment can be designed to fit the physical and cognitive abilities of the worker.

**Q: What can you tell us about the ergonomics program at the Selikoff Centers and how we support stakeholders?**

**A:** At the Selikoff Centers, our ergonomics program is multidisciplinary, made up of several members of the Selikoff team, such as ergonomists, industrial hygienists, occupational medicine physicians, epidemiologists, and support staff.

Our expert team supports individual workers through workspace evaluations, where we look at the employee's workspace to identify any occupational exposures and recommend solutions for reducing those exposures. We also work collaboratively with organizations, such as unions and employers, to provide customized training and education, conduct group exposure assessments, and establish health and safety committees to address occupational health and safety hazards in the workplace.

## Meet the Team!

### **Jonathan Dropkin, ScD, PT, CPE, Associate Professor, Faculty Ergonomist**

Jonathan Dropkin has a background in applied physiology, physical therapy, and ergonomics. Jonathan's clinical focus is on secondary prevention and the older worker. Likewise, his research focus is on the workability of the older adult.

### **Arlette Loeser, MA, OTR/L CIE, Program Director, Certified Ergonomist**

Arlette Loeser has over 20 years of experience in clinical and programmatic initiatives in ergonomics, assistive technologies, and safe patient handling. She has worked with small and large companies to conceive and implement injury prevention and return-to-work programs and has presented in educational forums worldwide.



**Scan the QR code to watch a video about our  
Ergonomics and Injury Prevention Program.**

**You can also visit our website to learn more:**

**[mountsinai.org/selikoff](https://mountsinai.org/selikoff)**

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