



**Mount  
Sinai**

*Selikoff Centers for  
Occupational Health*

## RISKS FOR MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES IN THE KITCHEN



Workers in the food service industry can be at risk for injuries. Food preparation staff, chefs, line cooks, servers, and even restaurant managers can prevent musculoskeletal injuries by learning more about ergonomics in the food services arena.

Risk of injury may surprise you, as you perform repetitive work tasks in a fast-paced demanding environment. Paying attention to how you perform your job can decrease the likelihood of developing painful conditions and ensure many years of workplace safety.

### ERGONOMIC RISK FACTORS

#### AWKWARD POSTURE

Reaching, carrying, and performing tasks in positions of discomfort and awkwardness promote the risk of back/neck pain and injury and inflammation of the shoulders, neck, and arms.

#### GRIPPING, PUSHING, PULLING

Exertion while handling utensils, pots and pans, boxes, and carts can increase the chance of injury, including tendonitis, de'quervains syndrome (thumb), hand and elbow flexor and extensor injuries and inflammatory shoulder conditions.

#### REPETITIVE MOTION

Slicing, dicing, and preparing food items, and cleaning pots, pans, and utensils requires force and repetition. This is most often connected to tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome.

#### STATIC POSITIONS

After standing for long shifts, chefs, managers, and hosts can develop foot conditions. These might include Chef's foot (known otherwise as arthritis of the big toe), ankle swelling, and plantar fasciitis.



#### WORKPLACE ORGANIZATION

When addressed, workplace stress and work organization can prevent slips, trips, falls, over-exertion, accidental spills, and human error.

# PREVENTING KITCHEN INJURIES

## LIFTING, CARRYING, AND LOADING

Suck in your stomach muscles, bend at your knees, and get close to the object.



## GRIPPING

Use a neutral posture (hand shake position) to obtain maximum strength.



## PULLING AND PUSHING

Use your body weight to push carts.



## REPETITIVE MOTIONS

Take mini breaks and stretch throughout the day.

## KITCHEN ATHLETE REGIMEN

To keep you at the top of your game, warm up, perform stretches and take breaks for muscle recovery.

### PRE-SHIFT WARMUP

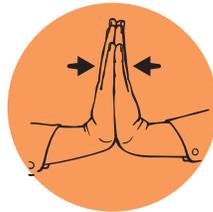
- **Feet Press Ups:** Place weight onto your heels and lift your toes in the air. Do 20 reps and then do the opposite, starting with toes. Benefit: Prepares foot muscles and helps circulation
- **Hip Sway:** Sway hips side to side, don't strain and keep a steady motion. Do 20, then rotate hips in circular motion, first in one direction then switch to the other. Benefit: Redistributes weight on feet and knees and loosens lower back area
- **Shoulder Rolls:** Roll in a full circle 20 times back and then forward. Benefit: Keeps shoulders and neck loose

### STRETCHES

Perform simple hand and arm stretches to improve flexibility and to reduce stress or strain in your upper extremities.

*NOTE: Stretch until you feel a gentle tension on the muscle, not discomfort, always release gently. Hold for a count of three, repeat three times several times a day.*

1. Shake out your arms to relieve tension.
2. Perform a "prayer stretch": place your palms together with finger tips pointing toward ceiling.

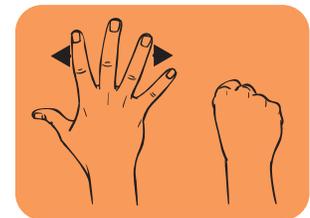


3. Open arms/hug stretch.

### PLAN AHEAD FOR SAFE LIFTING

- Where is the load going?
- Should you use cart or hand truck?
- Is help needed?
- Are there any obstacles to move?
- Is there any strapping material to remove?
- Is the floor slippery?
- What is the best way to grip the load?
- Test the weight first by pushing the load a few inches on floor

4. Make a tight fist then straighten your fingers, spreading them apart as much as you can.



5. Straighten elbows, make gentle fists, and bend wrists and hands down, continue until a stretch is felt on your forearms.

If you experience discomfort while working see a healthcare professional who is experienced in Occupational Medicine. The providers of the **Mount Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health** are experts in preventing, diagnosing, and treating occupational injuries and diseases. **For over 50 years** the Selikoff Centers have strived to keep workers and their workplaces injury-free and safe.

For more information, please visit [www.mountsinai.org/selikoff](http://www.mountsinai.org/selikoff) or call 888.702.0630.