



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HAND THERAPISTS™

PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE

Ergonomics & Joint Protection

“Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients.”

Marybeth Ezaki, MD, Past President, American Society for Surgery of the Hand

What is ergonomics & joint protection?

Ergonomics looks at a person’s daily tasks at a job, hobby or home to find ways to make activities safer and more efficient. One part of this is joint protection techniques, or ways to complete activities in a simpler way. This will help you to not hurt your joints or wear them down as time goes on.



Poor workspace setup can cause pain in many different body parts

What are the symptoms?

Poor ergonomic habits can often lead to injuries of your tendons, joints, muscles and nerves. Over time, you may even develop arthritis, especially when the small joints are used for jobs stronger than they are made for. Other symptoms like eye strain, fatigue, headache and decreased productivity may also occur.

What causes poor ergonomics & joint strain?

Improper workstation setup can place body parts in positions that may cause strain to tendons, muscles, joints and nerves. This can happen if you work at a desk, factory or while doing activities at home. Repeating tasks or movements without changing positions can lead to a buildup of pressure and strain in your body. After long or repeated periods of time, pressure in the body can lead to injury.

What is the treatment for body issues related to ergonomics & joint protection?

For joint, muscle, nerve or tendon pain and injuries, it is important to see a doctor first. A hand therapist can then treat your injury with tools such as heat or ice, massage, stretching and exercise. Learning how to change your habits to make your activities fit your body is very important, so as not to reinjure yourself. There are many tips your hand therapist can share with you. You may need to change your workstation to better fit your body. Learning to stretch, take breaks and change your position are helpful actions. There are also tools that can make work easier for you. For example, using an electric can opener while in the kitchen, or carrying items in a backpack instead of in a shopping bag can help. Your workspace can be arranged to best fit your body and needs. Other factors such as temperature and lighting can also be considered.

What can a hand therapist do for me?

A hand therapist can offer some ideas to make your work, home and hobby space safer and less stressful to your body. These ideas can be applied to prevent injuries, as well as treating your current symptoms. Ideas can be specific to your activities and routines. After injuries, a hand therapist can help you on the road to recovery. Your hand therapist may suggest stretching or rest routines to ease strain during specific activities. They may also recommend different types of tools to make jobs easier for you. Finally, a hand therapist can help make suggestions to change



your environment to optimize your ability to complete tasks.

Your hand therapist can suggest tools that will ease strain on joints

To locate a hand therapist in your area, visit the American Society of Hand Therapists at www.asht.org or call 856-380-6856.