



## Safety Talk: Awkward Postures



**Awkward postures are deviations of body parts from their neutral position. Working in these postures is a contributing factor to musculoskeletal disorders and can cause discomfort.**

### Preventing musculoskeletal disorders

Select tools that will allow you to work in neutral postures.

Use height-adjustable workbenches and chairs.

Avoid bending over by using lift devices to hold workpieces at waist-height.

Use step stools or ladders to avoid reaching overhead.

Perform work at the proper heights:

- Above the elbows for precision work
- At the elbows for light work
- Between the waist and elbows for heavy work

When awkward postures cannot be avoided:

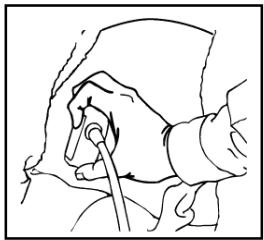
- Limit the duration in the posture
- Take regular breaks
- Perform a variety of jobs to change postures
- Complete forceful actions closer to neutral posture

**Ergonomics and Back Safety Training are offered online through [chalk.uchicago.edu](http://chalk.uchicago.edu)**

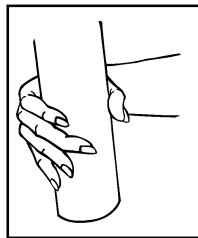
### Awkward postures increase the total exertion required to complete a job:

- The body must apply force to joints and muscles to deviate body parts from the neutral position
- The further the deviation, the more force that is applied
- The further the deviation, the less force you are able to apply to your tool
- Working in awkward postures will cause you to fatigue faster

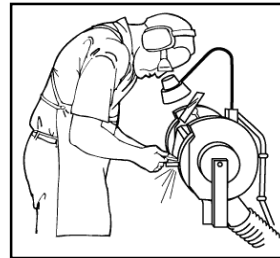
### Here are some common examples of awkward postures:



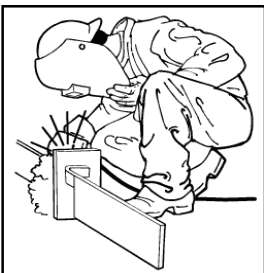
Extended wrist



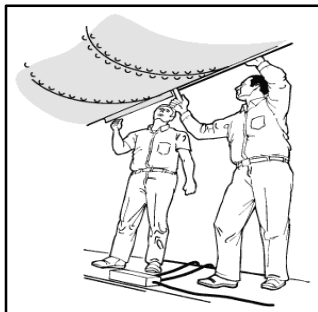
Flexed wrist



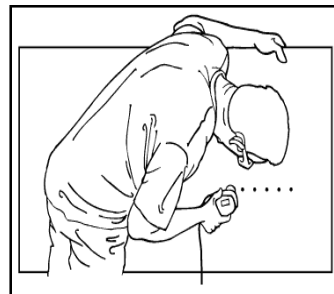
Bent neck



Squatting



Working overhead



Back bent forward



Reaching



Kneeling