Loss Control Information Bulletin

Strains and Sprains in the Food Service Industry

The food service industry presents a number of exposures to strain and sprain injuries. Employees who cook in restaurants are exposed to strains and sprains due to prolonged standing and repetitive or prolonged reaching while cooking and turning food in the kitchen areas.

The source of strain and sprain exposures include:

- *Static postures that occur as cooks continuously stand in one position while cooking and preparing food. This causes pooling of blood in the lower extremities, muscle fatigue, and pain.*
- *Prolonged standing on hard work surfaces such as concrete can create contact trauma and pain in the feet.*
- *Awkward neck postures can lead to neck strains and muscle stiffness when cooks constantly tilt the head downward or upward to cook food.*
- *Lifting the arms repeatedly and over-reaching can irritate the tendons or bursa of the shoulder. This leads to arm and shoulder strain.*

To avoid potential strains and sprains in the workplace, identify the hazards in your operations and find ways to decrease them by applying ergonomic solutions such as:

- *Avoid static postures by continually changing positions. Use a footrest bar or a low stool to help alter posture by raising one foot and then the other.*
- *Use anti-fatigue mats where practical on hard work surfaces. Anti-fatigue mats help contract and expand the muscles of the person standing on them. This increases the blood flow and reduces fatigue.*
- *Wear shoes with well-cushioned insteps and soles.*
- *Use adjustable work surfaces where practical.*
- *Minimize reaching by organizing the work environment so that most cooking processes can be completed within easy reach and while keeping the elbows in close to the body.*

By implementing a few precautions in the work environment, the potential of strains and sprains can be reduced. Management has the responsibility to identify hazards and exposures to strains and sprains in the workplace and provide control devices or procedures to reduce potential injuries to workers.