



The Importance of Hydration

Water does more for your body than quench your thirst. It regulates your temperature, keeps your joints and muscles working properly, and helps carry oxygen throughout your body. As such, staying hydrated is one of the simplest ways to protect yourself and prevent accidents on the job.

Why Hydration Matters

Your body constantly loses water through sweating, breathing and other normal bodily functions. When lost fluids aren't replaced, dehydration sets in. Even mild dehydration can affect your focus, coordination and judgment, which raises your risk of an accident. Left unchecked, mild dehydration can quickly progress to severe dehydration, which is a medical emergency that requires immediate care.

Signs of Dehydration

Watch for the following signs of mild dehydration:

- Thirst
- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fatigue or muscle weakness
- Dark yellow or amber colored urine

If you or a co-worker shows signs of severe dehydration (e.g., rapid heartbeat and breathing, little to no urination for several hours, confusion or

lack of consciousness), tell your supervisor right away and seek medical attention.

Steps to Stay Hydrated

Follow these tips to stay hydrated during your shift:

- Start your shift hydrated. Drink water before you begin working, especially if you're coming off a long night's sleep.
- Drink 1 cup (8 ounces) of water every 15 to 20 minutes while working, even if you don't feel thirsty. Thirst means you're already dehydrated.
- Aim for roughly 24 to 32 ounces of water per hour when performing physically demanding tasks.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol. Both act as diuretics and can increase fluid loss.
- Use sports drinks or electrolyte supplements to help replace salts lost through sweat, especially during long shifts.
- Take advantage of scheduled water and rest breaks.
- Continue drinking water after your shift ends. It can take several hours to fully rehydrate, and doing so sooner reduces strain on your body.

Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water. Keep water within reach throughout your shift and check in on your co-workers, especially during heavy exertion. A few extra sips throughout the day can make all the difference in avoiding workplace accidents and medical emergencies.

Recognizing the Warning Signs of Ergonomic Injuries

Many workplace injuries don't happen all at once. Instead, they develop gradually as the body is exposed to repeated motions, awkward postures or sustained physical demands over time. These types of ergonomic injuries can be easy to overlook, but early warning signs are your body's way of signaling that something isn't right.

Understanding what to look for and acting early can help prevent minor discomfort from becoming a more serious injury that affects your health, comfort and ability to work.

Key Signs and Symptoms

It is important to pay attention to early warning signs of ergonomic injuries. Recognizing, reporting and addressing symptoms early can prevent more serious injuries. Here are some common signs of ergonomic injuries:

- **Aching or pain in muscles or joints**—This may start as mild discomfort but can gradually increase in intensity, especially during or after repetitive tasks.
- **Stiffness or reduced range of motion**—You may notice difficulty moving a joint as freely as usual, particularly after periods of inactivity or at the start of your shift.
- **Tingling or numbness**—A “pins and needles” sensation or loss of feeling can indicate nerve involvement and should not be ignored, especially if it occurs frequently.
- **Burning sensations in muscles**—A feeling of heat or irritation in a specific muscle group during or after activity may signal overuse or strain.
- **Visible swelling, warmth or inflammation**—Swelling, tenderness or warmth around joints or

muscles can be a sign that the body is responding to repeated stress or injury.

- **Weakness or loss of grip strength**—You may find it harder to hold tools, lift objects or perform tasks that were previously easy, which can increase the risk of further injury.
- **Unusual fatigue or weakness**—You may feel unusual fatigue or weakness while doing normal tasks, even when the level of effort hasn't changed. Your muscles may tire more quickly or take longer to recover.
- **Discomfort that develops slowly and becomes more frequent or intense over time**—Symptoms may start off mild and occasional, but can increase in frequency, duration or severity if the underlying cause is not addressed, eventually impacting your ability to perform normal work tasks.

How to Respond

If you notice signs of an ergonomic injury, do not ignore them or assume they will go away on their own. Report your symptoms to your supervisor as soon as possible. You should also seek medical evaluation if symptoms persist or interfere with your ability to work safely.

Taking prompt action, following recommended work modifications and using proper ergonomic practices can help you recover more quickly and reduce the risk of long-term injury.

Reach out to your supervisor for additional workplace safety resources.



Live Well, Work Well

September 2026

Cholesterol and You

Cholesterol is a substance in your blood that your body needs to build cells; yet, too much can pose a problem. Cholesterol travels through the blood on proteins called lipoproteins. There are two types:

1. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL), known as **bad cholesterol**, makes up most of your body's cholesterol. High levels of LDL cholesterol can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.
2. High-density lipoprotein (HDL), known as **good cholesterol**, absorbs cholesterol and carries it back to the liver to be flushed from the body.

More than 40% of U.S. adults with high cholesterol—and 1 in 4 with very high levels—don't know they have it, according to a study published in JAMA Cardiology.

High cholesterol usually has no symptoms, so the American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that adults age 20 or older have their cholesterol checked every four to six years. Bad cholesterol can be elevated by age, family history, certain health conditions (e.g., Type 2 diabetes and obesity) and lifestyle factors. While you can't control all of these factors, you can take steps to lower your risk:

- **Eat a heart-healthy, balanced diet.**
Saturated and trans fats can increase your

cholesterol, so focus on monounsaturated fats (e.g., olive oil, nuts and avocados) and polyunsaturated fats (e.g., salmon and margarine). Also, limit red meat, fried foods, processed meats and baked goods.

- **Exercise regularly.** The AHA recommends individuals get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise each week. Adding resistance exercises to your routine at least twice a week can also help.
- **Avoid or quit smoking.** Smoking tobacco increases LDL cholesterol, decreases HDL cholesterol and can result in cholesterol buildup in one's arteries.
- **Limit alcohol use.** For men, this typically means up to two drinks per day, and for women, one drink per day.
- **Maintain a weight that is healthy for you.** Having obesity can increase your risk of high cholesterol. A doctor can help determine a sustainable weight management plan.

The only way to know whether you have high cholesterol is to have your levels checked. Be sure to visit your doctor for regular cholesterol screenings.

Are You Prepared for an Emergency?

Disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes can strike with little or no warning. Roads may become impassable, power could be out for days and emergency services might be overwhelmed. In these situations, having a plan can make all the difference between chaos and calm.

September is National Preparedness Month. As such, consider using this time to plan for scenarios that may require you to evacuate your home or shelter in place.

Preparedness isn't just about stocking up on supplies; it's about knowing what to do, where to go and how to stay safe. Consider these four key steps to help you and your household prepare:

1. **Know your risks.** Understand the types of disasters most likely to affect your area.

2. **Create a communication plan.** Make sure every member of your household knows how to reach each other during an emergency.
3. **Assemble an emergency kit.** Your kit should include nonperishable food and water (enough for at least three days), flashlights and extra batteries, basic first-aid supplies, medications and personal hygiene items, important documents (e.g., IDs and insurance papers) in a waterproof container, and a battery-powered radio.
4. **Plan for evacuation and shelter-in-place orders.** Know your local evacuation routes and shelters. Also, prepare for scenarios in which you may need to stay indoors for several days.

Visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) to learn more about preparing for emergencies at home, at work and on the road.

Meal Prepping Tips

September brings a shift in routine as school schedules kick back in and free time shrinks. Meal prepping is the concept of preparing meals for the week ahead. It can lead to more nutritious choices and help save valuable time on busy weeknights.

HelloFresh's State of Home Cooking report revealed that 38% of Americans don't have groceries on hand when they need them, which is one of the biggest obstacles to making dinner.

- Pick recipes with varying cooking methods (e.g., oven or stovetop).
- Choose which meals to prepare first based on their cook times.
- Store meals properly in portioned containers. Refrigerate meals you plan to eat within three to four days and freeze the rest.

Meal prepping doesn't have to be intimidating. Try these basic steps to cut down on cooking time and have more time for other activities.

Fortunately, meal prepping can help solve that problem. Consider these best practices:

- Stick to a schedule for when you plan, grocery shop and prepare your meals.