



Pain in the Neck? Tips for Avoiding Neck Spasms

The main causes of neck spasms in the workplace are poor posture and improper lifting. Here are some ways to avoid neck pain:

When you stand: Keep your shoulders relaxed and in line with your ears. Maintain the natural curves of your spine. Stand with feet about shoulder width apart, and distribute your weight evenly over both feet. Keep your knees slightly flexed and your hips centered over your knees.

When you sit: Sit up straight and avoid slouching, hunching over your work, or leaning forward in your chair. Keep your head centered over your shoulders, not tilted forward, backward, or to one side. Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, not tensed. Keep your feet flat on the floor or resting on a footstool.

When you lift: Face the load with feet shoulder width apart. Keep heels down and turn feet slightly out. Squat by bending at the hips and knees. Use leg and stomach muscles to power the lift, not back muscles. Keep your head up as you lift.

Inspect Yourself for Safety

When safety experts talk about workplace inspections, they're usually talking about inspecting *things*, but what about people? Shouldn't they be inspected for safety, too?

At the start of every workday, give yourself a good once over:

- Are you wearing required PPE?
- Do you have on sensible shoes with nonslip soles or safety shoes?
- Have you secured long hair, long sleeves, or other items that could get caught in moving parts if you're going to be working around machinery?
- Are you wide awake and fully alert?
- How's your safety attitude?
- Have you covered cuts and scrapes with a bandage to keep them clean while you work?
- Have you talked to your supervisor if you're taking any medications that could make you drowsy or slow to respond to danger and place you at risk of an accident?
- Have you taken a couple of minutes to stretch and loosen up your muscles if you're going to be doing physical work?
- Is your work posture relaxed and correct so that you avoid stresses and strains on your body while you work?
- Is your mind fully focused on your work, and not on personal problems or what you're going to do after work?
- Is all the information you need to work firmly fixed in your mind?

Good! Now you're ready to work safely. Just remember to keep your guard up and inspect yourself again when you return from meals and coffee breaks.



Keep Your Guard Up: Be a Consistent Hazard Inspector

Many common workplace accidents occur because people let their guard down. They get to thinking that nothing bad has happened so far, so nothing *could* or *will* happen today or tomorrow. Unfortunately, that may not be true. If you stop looking for hazards, one is more likely to injure you. How badly you're hurt will depend on how bad the hazard is. Don't let that hazard sneak up on you. Inspect your work area at the beginning of your shift and periodically throughout the workday. While you work, keep your guard up and keep checking for potential problems. In other words, be a hazard inspector all the time. Here's what to look for:

⇒ **Obvious hazards** such as wet floors, poor housekeeping, leaking chemical containers, or poorly stacked supplies that could topple over.

⇒ **Hidden hazards** such as shocks from electrical equipment, burns from surfaces you don't realize are hot, trips over objects you don't see, and hazardous chemical vapors you can't see or smell.

⇒ **Hazards that weren't there the last time you looked.** Remember that things change all the time in the workplace.

⇒ **New hazards** introduced by new procedures or equipment. You'll learn about new hazards in safety meetings. Then it's your job to keep alert for them.

⇒ **Old hazards** you thought had been corrected. Sometimes fixes don't work as well as anticipated, and hazards you thought had been eliminated come back. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security about safety.



"What am I doing? Inspecting hazards, just like you asked!"

Take Responsibility for Safe Housekeeping

OSHA requires us to keep the workplace "clean, orderly, and in a sanitary condition" to prevent injuries and illness. To ensure a safe place to work, we all have to pitch in and take responsibility for good, safe housekeeping.

- Don't leave tools, cords, boxes, and other tripping hazards on the floor.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Never place materials in aisles and passageways or on the stairs.
- Stack materials carefully and securely so that they don't fall over.
- Don't leave sharp tools lying around with their edges exposed.
- Turn off and unplug power tools when you're not using them.
- Keep drawers closed so they do not become a tripping hazard.
- Don't let combustible trash and scrap build up. Dispose of it at regular intervals.
- Keep flammable and combustible materials away from ignition sources.
- Make sure chemical containers are properly sealed and not leaking.
- Prevent dirt and grease from building up on machinery.
- Avoid keeping food and beverage in the work area.
- Report any hazards you can't safely eliminate yourself.