

Laboratory Ergonomics Workplace Controls

Guideline

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Applies To: University of Michigan faculty, staff, and students working in a laboratory.

The following workplace practice controls will help prevent or reduce discomfort that may result from working in a laboratory (lab).

General Lab Practices

- Raise laboratory stools to allow for comfortable shoulders and arms at bench height, then support feet on a footrest.
- Be sure all seated areas have adequate leg/foot room under the bench by removing drawers, moving equipment, or a combination of these actions.
- Verify lights in fume hoods and biosafety cabinets are working properly and replace bulbs when necessary.
- Add padding to sharp surfaces (i.e., Biosafety cabinets, fume hoods, and a table or counter).
- Place the most used items within reach or use a turntable to store equipment near research.

Lab Director Leadership

Whether or not your lab has all the ergonomic-friendly equipment and supplies, you and your staff are still responsible for using proper ergonomic workplace practices. For you, the lab director, the best way you can help your staff stay free from discomfort is to implement the following practices:

- Limit dissection or micromanipulation tasks with forceps to less than five hours a week.
- Split micromanipulation tasks between lab workers and encourage them to take breaks often.
- Schedule pipetting activities for each staff to less than two hours per day
 - Limit periods of continuous pipetting to 20 minutes or less
 - Vary activities and rotate pipetting tasks among several people

Lab Staff Practices

- Adjust chair height and back and foot supports prior to starting research activities.
- Take frequent breaks to perform stretching exercises and relieve static loading from the shoulders.
- Move equipment closer to the edge of the counter.
- Place most used items within reach or use a turntable to store the items near the research.
- Use pencil grips on pens, pencils, and forceps to prevent soreness on the fingertips, where fingers and forceps articulate.

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control Lab Ergonomics home page at: <http://www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/Ergonomics/labergo.htm>