

Over the Edge

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

CLEANING ERGONOMICS



There's no need to strain while you clean. You've heard of tennis elbow, but who would have thought you could actually injure yourself while scrubbing the tub? If you're bending incorrectly while cleaning the tub or twisting to get to a hard-to-reach spot in the shower, you can hurt yourself. Doing the wrong thing over and over again takes its toll on your body. Here are some common mistakes people make while cleaning at home and on the job—and some tips for avoiding injuries.

Double kneeling. Avoid kneeling on both knees to scrub the floor. If you have to get down on your knees, try kneeling on one knee and then switching to the other one every minute to minimize the pressure and disperse it.

Bending at the back. When tackling household chores, follow the old saying "bend at the knees and not the back." While your knees are slightly flexed, keep a hollow in your back, the opposite of rounding your back. This will help minimize back strain.

Overreaching. When cleaning windows that are beyond your reach, use a stool or a step ladder so you don't hyperextend your back. Or, better yet, try a cleaning product with an ergonomic handle. Whenever you're reaching, keep your reach just shy of your full arm extension to minimize straining your shoulder and spine.

Stretch when you're done. Cleaning is exercise, and, just like after finishing a workout, you should stretch when you're done. Take a few minutes to roll your head from side to side, stretch your arms over your head, and touch your toes when you're done scrubbing. You'll be glad you did when you're without back pain!



SAFETY TIPS FOR EVERY EMPLOYEE

- Do not stand on chairs, tables, or desks to reach items or decorate your work area.
- Be constantly alert of any potential hazards in your work area.
- Follow all safety rules or guidelines.
- Ensure you are properly trained on any equipment before attempting to operate.
- Always wear the proper attire for your assignment, including any personal protective equipment.
- Familiarize yourself with the emergency exits.
- Utilize safe lifting practices: test the load before lifting, keep the object close to your body, use your legs and not your back when lifting, and move your feet to avoid twisting while moving objects.

Remember, safety is everyone's responsibility. If you have questions about the safest way to perform a job, please contact your Supervisor.

OUCH, THAT'S GONNA LEAVE A MARK! SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS



Now that you've asked yourself, "How many times are they going to go over this!" I'll tell you—As many times as it takes! Slips, trips, and falls continue to be the most reported type of injury in schools.

A heightened sense of awareness should always be used when walking. **SLOW DOWN** and keep your hands out of your pockets – you will have better balance! If forced to venture outdoors most folks will innately 'pick up the pace' and do so with their hands in their pockets. **Slow Down!**

The cost of injury due to slips, trips, and falls are not only the most reported employee injury - they are the most expensive, too. These injuries can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. Think of the ripple effect of the injury. The injured employee loses time from work. This may cause other employees to have to work overtime to cover the injured worker's job duties. This increases the workload on fellow employees while leaving the school shorter staffed than it already was. The increased workload could also have physical, mental and emotional effects on the staff. OSHA reports that nearly half of the workplace injuries are slips, falls, and sprains.

We protect ourselves as well as our fellow co-workers:

- Practice good housekeeping.
- If you find water pooled in a foot traffic area, notify someone.
- Notify your supervisor of slip and trip hazards if you cannot correct the condition.
- Use the handrails when going up or down stairs.
- Wear appropriate shoes with non-slip soles.
- Show up for work mentally and physically prepared.
- Horseplay is never an option at work.

TOP SUMMER EXERCISE ESSENTIALS

If you're out enjoying the summer, make sure you stock up on a few items to keep you cool, dry and sunburn free.



- Always wear a hat to protect your face. A mesh hat is light and lets the heat evaporate.
- Water-fanny-pack - stay hydrated.
- Sunblock - SPF 30 - Put on about 20 minutes before you exercise for maximum protection.
- Lightweight, baggy shorts with an inner lining to wick away sweat and provide coverage for just about any activity.
- Shirt - Protect your skin while staying cool. Avoid tank tops. Wear a baggy shirt with sleeves to protect your skin and stay cool.
- Cooling Headband - These headband/neck wraps keep you cool. Soak in cold water for about five minutes and wrap around your neck to keep cool while you walk, bike, run, or work.

STAY OUT OF THE SUN - CELLULAR SKIN CHANGES CAUSED BY UV RADIATION

Sunlight damage to skin causes premature skin aging, skin cancer, and other skin changes. Exposure to ultraviolet light, UVA or UVB, from sunlight accounts for 90% of the symptoms of premature skin aging. Many skin changes that were commonly believed to be due to aging are actually a result of prolonged exposure to UV radiation.

UVB radiation - affects the outer layer of skin and is the primary agent responsible for sunburns. It is most intense between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm when the sunlight is brightest. It is also more intense in the summer months, accounting for 70% of a person's yearly UVB dose. UVB does not penetrate glass.

UVA Radiation - UVA is a major contributor to skin damage. UVA penetrates deeper into the skin. The intensity of UVA radiation is more constant than UVB without the variations during the day and throughout the year. UVA is also not filtered by glass.

Damaging Effects of UVA and UVB - Both UVA and UVB radiation can cause skin damage including wrinkles, lowered immunity against infection, aging skin disorders, and cancer.

- Texture Changes - UV exposure causes thinning of the skin causing fine wrinkles, easy bruising, and skin tearing.
- Blood Vessel Changes - UV radiation causes the walls of blood vessels to become thinner, leading to bruising with only minor trauma in sun-exposed areas.
- Pigment Changes - The most noticeable sun-induced pigment change is a freckle.
- Skin Bumps - UV radiation causes an increased number of moles in sun-exposed areas.
- Skin Cancer - Melanoma is the most deadly skin cancer because it metastasizes more readily than other skin cancers.



Heat Stress Disorders

Heat Exhaustion

Although not the most serious health problem, heat exhaustion is very common. Heat exhaustion happens when a worker sweats a lot and does not drink enough fluids or take in enough salt or both.

Signs and symptoms

- Sweaty, Weak or tired, possibly giddy
- Nausea, Normal or slightly higher body temperature
- Pale, clammy skin (sometimes flushed)

What to do

- Rest in a cool place. Drink an electrolyte solution. Avoid caffeine.
- Severe cases – call 911

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is the most serious health problem for people working in the heat, but is not very common. It is caused by the failure of the body to regulate its core temperature. Sweating stops and the body cannot get rid of excess heat. Victims will die unless they receive proper treatment promptly.

Signs and symptoms

- Mental confusion, delirium, fainting, or seizures
- Body temperature of 106°F or higher
- Hot, dry skin, usually red or bluish color

What to do:

- Call 9-1-1 immediately and request an ambulance
- Move victim to a cool area
- Soak the victim with cool water
- Fan the victim vigorously to increase cooling

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms. They occur when a worker drinks a lot of water, but does not replace salts lost from sweating.

Signs and symptoms:

- Cramping or spasms of muscles.

What to do

- Drink an electrolyte solution (sports drink)
- Severe Cramps may require medical attention.

Fainting (Heat Syncope)

Fainting usually happens to someone who is not used to working in the hot environment and simply stands around.

Moving around, rather than standing still, will usually reduce the likelihood of fainting.

Signs and symptoms

- Brief loss of consciousness
- Sweaty skin, normal body temperature
- No signs of heat stroke or heat exhaustion

What to do:

- Lie down in a cool place
- Seek medical attention if not recovered after brief period of lying down

Heat Rash

Heat rash, also called prickly heat, may occur in hot and humid environments where sweat cannot evaporate easily.

Signs and symptoms

- rash characterized by small pink or red bumps on skin, irritation or prickly sensation itching

What to do

- keep skin clean and dry to prevent infection wear loose cotton clothing

Work Practices to Prevent Heat Illness

- Clothing: Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, such as cotton, to allow sweat to evaporate. Light colors absorb less heat than dark colors. When working outside, wear a lightweight hat with a good brim to keep the sun off your head and face.
- Drinking: Drink plenty of liquids, especially if your urine is dark yellow, to replace the fluids you lose from sweating – as much as one quart per hour may be necessary. Water and/or sports drinks are recommended. Since caffeine is a diuretic (makes you urinate more), beverage such as cola, iced tea and coffee should be avoided. Thirst is not a reliable sign that your body needs fluids. When doing heavy work, it is better to sip rather than gulp the liquids.
- Acclimatization: Take time to get used to the heat.
- Work Schedule: Schedule heavy work during the cooler parts of the day. Otherwise, alternate heavy work in the heat with lighter work or work in cooler areas.