



# Preventing Ergonomic Injuries to Food Servers

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Food servers, waitstaff, and persons in the food service industry have job tasks that can lead to awkward postures and strain on muscles causing injuries. Being aware of risk factors can help prevent ergonomic injuries.

The human body functions best in comfortable (neutral) postures. Awkward body postures increase the stress on ligaments and joints. This can lead to fatigue, discomfort, and increase the risk of injury. Carrying trays, plates, or beverages during table service often results in awkward postures for servers. Servers may not feel pain or discomfort when in risky postures, but the potential for injury is still present. Being aware of posture while working can reduce risk of injury.

Muscles produce force to move or hold a posture. Excess forces can result in injury. Excess forces are required to lift, lower, carry, push, or pull heavy objects, especially in awkward postures. Excess forces are also required to hold a posture, especially for long periods. For example, carrying plates often places the wrist and fingers in

*Example of awkward wrist and elbow posture*



*Example of an awkward finger posture*



Courtesy of Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia

*Example of preferred posture*



Courtesy of Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia

awkward positions, and requires strength to support and balance the load. In addition, carrying coffee pots, water jugs, and full glasses places stress on the fingers, wrists, forearm, and shoulder.

To reduce the risk of injury, servers should practice safety tips while on the job.

- Carry a loaded tray with your shoulder, arm, and hand in a neutral position as shown below.
- Carry a tray as close to your body as possible.
- Balance the tray on both your arm and hand.
- When it's not possible to carry a tray in this manner, alternate which hand you use to carry the tray and vary your posture.
- Balance the load and place heavy items close to the center.
- Make sure the tray is clean and dry.
- Carry fewer plates and other items at a time. Make two trips or ask other servers to help carry large orders.
- Carry plates, coffee pots, and water jugs close to your body.
- When pouring, move the glass or cup as close to you as possible, rather than overreaching with a full jug.

Remember practice safety; don't learn it by accident.

This Take 5 was published with information from the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia and the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission.

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