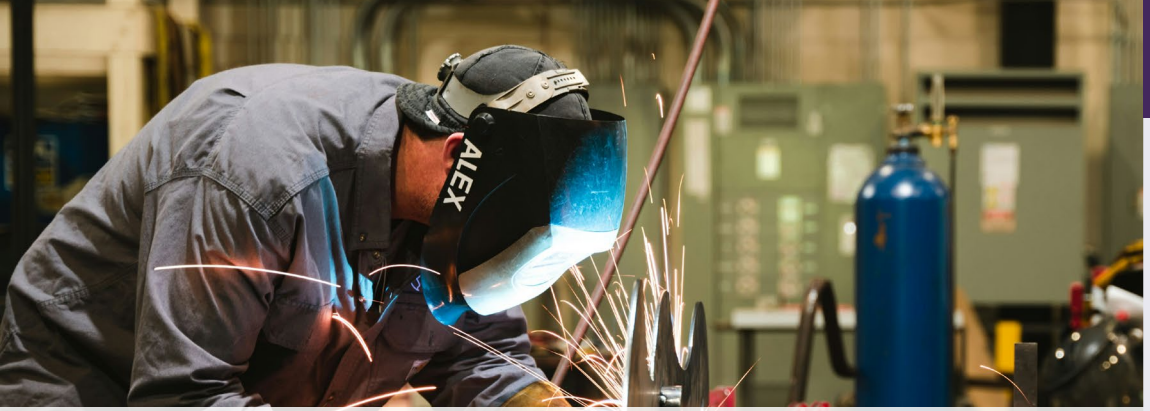

Quick Workstation Setup Check

Office of Mental Health | New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience
- Production Workers
- Machine Operators
- Assemblers
- Packing Operators
- Maintenance Technician
- Material Handlers

Description
This is a quick check that can be done at the start-of-shift, after breaks, or before restarting work. This practice is designed to help workers notice early signs of body strain caused by workstation setup or task design.

When to Use
Use this after a machine jam, alarm, stoppage, or any mechanical error.

WORKPLACE STRESS

Many work-related injuries develop slowly over time due to repeated posture issues, awkward reaching, or long periods of static positioning. Over time, injury can lead to chronic pain which can be both mentally and physically depleting. This checklist helps identify those risks early so small adjustments can be made before discomfort or injury develops.

The goal is not to “pass or fail,” but to increase awareness of how your body is positioned during work and encourage safer, more comfortable movement throughout the shift.

WHY THIS HELPS

Many strain and repetitive stress injuries develop gradually. Workers often adapt to uncomfortable positions without noticing them. Over time, this can lead to pain in the neck, shoulders, back, wrists, or arms.

A quick self-check helps bring attention to posture and movement habits. Identifying small risks early allows simple adjustments that can reduce long-term strain and improve comfort and safety.

THE PRACTICE

Read each statement and answer **YES** if it applies to your current setup:

- ☐ My elbows are not close to a 90° angle while performing my work.
- ☐ I bend my neck forward or downward for long periods while working.
- ☐ I reach above shoulder height repeatedly to perform my tasks.
- ☐ I twist my body instead of facing my work directly.
- ☐ I remain in the same position for long periods without movement.

SCORING

0–1 YES: Low Risk
Your posture and workstation setup appear generally safe.
Continue working and stay aware of how your body feels.

2 YES: Moderate Risk
Some adjustments may help reduce strain.

Examples:
- Move materials closer to your body
- Adjust table or workstation height
- Change stance or shift posture periodically
- Take short movement breaks when possible

3 or More YES: Higher Risk
Your current setup may increase risk of strain or injury.

Adjustments:
- Adjust your workstation setup before continuing
- Take brief stretch or movement breaks
- Notify a supervisor or safety/ergonomics contact for support

WHY THIS WORKS

- **Early awareness prevents injury.**
  Noticing small issues early helps reduce long-term strain.
- **Better posture reduces muscle fatigue.**
  Proper alignment lowers stress on joints and muscles.
- **Small adjustments have big effects.**
  Simple changes in setup can significantly improve comfort.
- **Movement supports circulation.**
  Changing position helps prevent stiffness and overuse injuries.
- **Prevention is more effective than recovery.**
  Addressing risks early helps maintain long-term health and safety at work.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the
NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org

Looking to go deeper? Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community. Check out the website here for additional details.

Sources:
This tool was informed by ergonomic risk factor research from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), OSHA ergonomic guidance, and posture-based ergonomic screening methods such as Rapid Upper Limb Assessment (RULA).