Awkward posture refers to positions of the body that deviate significantly from the neutral position while performing work activities. When you are in an awkward position, muscles operate less efficiently, and more force must be expended to do the task. Working in these postures is a common contributing factor to musculoskeletal disorders.

Awkward postures increase the total exertion required to complete a job:
- The body must apply force to joints and muscles to deviate body parts from the neutral position
- The further the deviation, the more force that is applied
- The further the deviation, the less force you are able to apply to your tool
- Working in awkward postures will cause fatigue, leading to injuries

Here are some common examples of awkward postures:
- Working Overhead
- Back Bent Forward
- Reaching
- Kneeling
- Wrist Bent back or Forward
- Bent Neck
- Squatting
Preventing musculoskeletal disorders:

• Select tools that will allow you to work in neutral postures.
• Use height-adjustable workbenches and chairs.
• Avoid bending over by using lift devices to hold work pieces at waist-height.
• Use step stools or ladders to avoid reaching overhead.
• Perform work at the proper heights:
  ➢ Above the elbows for precision work
  ➢ At the elbows for light work
  ➢ Between the waist and elbows for heavy work

When awkward postures cannot be avoided:

• Respect your discomfort or pain. Change positions, stretch to ease stiff muscles, take a short break, or change tasks.
  ➢ Limit the duration in the posture
  ➢ Take regular breaks
  ➢ Perform a variety of jobs to change postures
  ➢ Complete forceful actions closer to neutral posture

By the Numbers:

X2 Chance of getting an injury if you work in a twisted position for 25% of your shift

34% of all lost time injuries are due to poor ergonomic work conditions

100% of a load is supported by the back discs in a flexed or twisted position
### Review / Discussion Questions:

1. What are some jobs that you do at Colby that require long periods of time in an awkward posture?
2. Are there any equipment or procedures that could be used to prevent or limit working in an awkward posture?
3. Is working in awkward positions unavoidable for certain jobs on campus? If yes, are there other methods to reduce risk?

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**Questions, concerns or comments contact the EHS Director at extension 5504.**