

A Safety Manager's Guide to ESTABLISHMENT

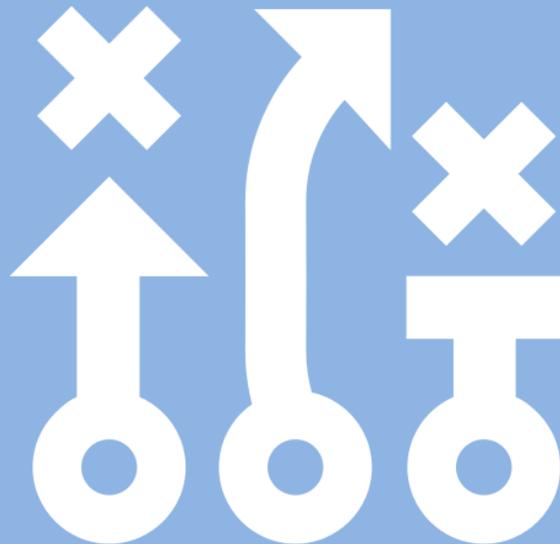


Table of Contents:

1. [The Biggest MSD Prevention Mistake You Can Make](#)
2. [How to Establish a Comprehensive and Integrated MSD Prevention process](#)

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The Biggest MSD Prevention Mistake You Can Make

Of course, the greatest mistake of all is to do nothing.

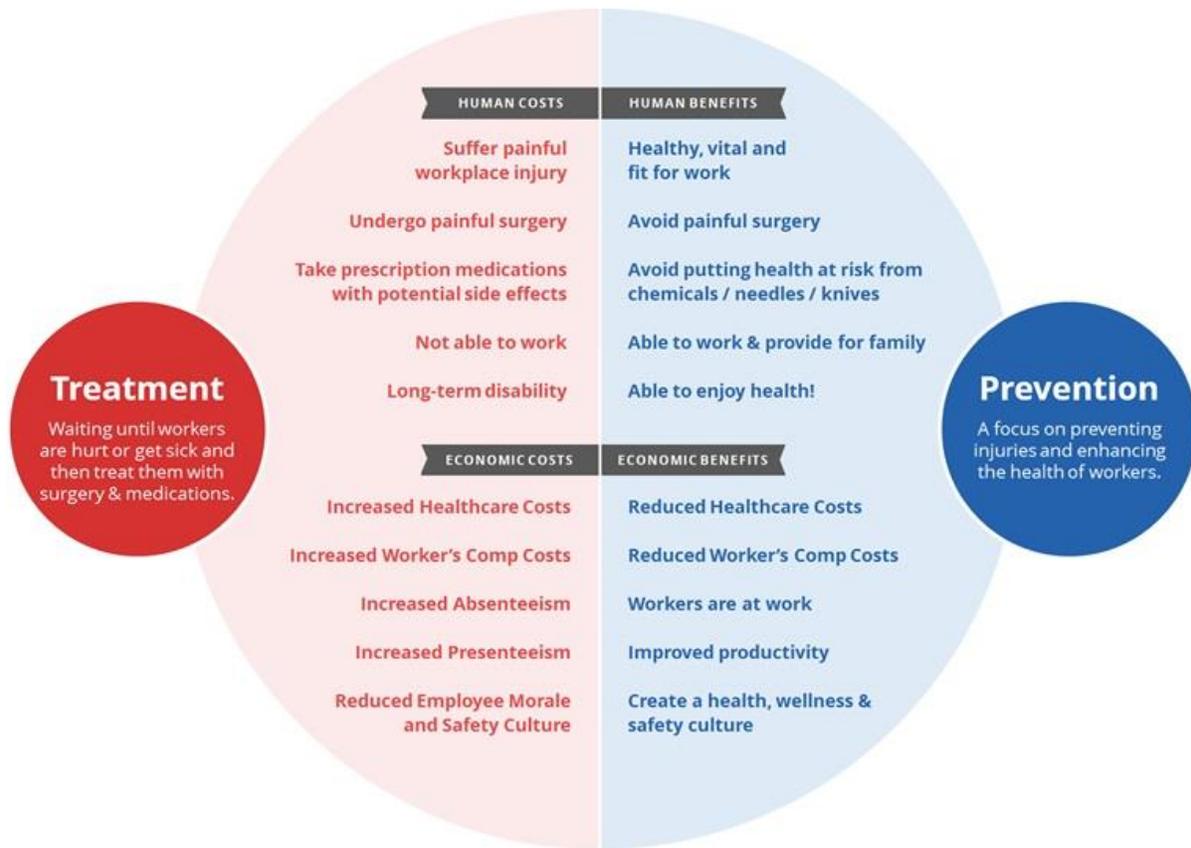
To wait until a person is sick or injured and treat them with surgery or prescription medications. This passive treatment philosophy is a failed model and a disservice to a company and its people.



It's not that treating sick and injured people is evil or wrong. The medical community offers tremendous value to our society and we need these well-meaning people to continue to provide a necessary service.

But it doesn't make sense to wait until people are sick or injured before we take action. In 2011, musculoskeletal injuries and disorders were the [largest category of workplace injuries](#) and accounted for 33% of injury/illness costs. *This is preventable.*

At Ergonomics Plus, we believe in a proactive approach. We believe [prevention is better than treatment](#).



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The Second Biggest MSD Prevention Mistake You Can Make

Recognizing the value of prevention, many smart and forward-thinking companies have created initiatives to proactively combat poor musculoskeletal health.

Unfortunately, many organizational initiatives aimed at improving musculoskeletal health are unorganized and inefficient. Many of these programs don't achieve the desired MSD prevention results *because they are operated independently of each*

other. While all of these programs have independent value, they're best when implemented together in a comprehensive way.

The best results are achieved when all of the pieces of the MSD Prevention puzzle work together, instead of operating independently of each other. A comprehensive approach ensures that all MSD risk factors are addressed.

The Path to Prevention and Enhanced Human Performance

The path to improved health and human performance is a comprehensive and integrated process that specifically targets musculoskeletal health.

Maximum human performance is achieved at the intersection of good workplace design and a healthy, fit and engaged workforce.

An ergonomically efficient workstation with an unhealthy and unmotivated worker using poor work practices is not your goal. A healthy, motivated worker that is forced to work outside her body's capabilities and limitations is not your goal.

Your goal has to be a well-designed and efficient workstation within the capabilities and limitations of a healthy, fit and engaged worker.



Good Workplace Design

The word “ergonomics” comes from the Greek word “ergon” which means work and “nomos” which means laws. It’s essentially the science of work. Good ergonomic design removes incompatibilities between the work and the worker and creates the optimal work environment. This allows you to efficiently create the best product possible.

Poor workplace design is not compatible with the worker and puts too much stress on the worker’s body. This leads to a fatigued, frustrated and hurting worker.

A systematic ergonomics improvement process removes these incompatibilities. This leads to less stress on the worker's body, allowing them to focus on doing their job instead of on their fatigue and pain.

A Healthy, Fit and Engaged Worker

A systematic workplace ergonomics process will go a long way to prevent injuries and improve performance. But you can do much more than that, and you will have to if you want the best results.

What good is an ergonomically correct workstation if the worker doesn't do their job properly? What if they use poor body mechanics? What if they ignore early signs and symptoms of declining musculoskeletal health? Or even worse, what if they don't even know the early warning signs and the potential consequences?

These "what if" scenarios could go on all day. The point is that a well-trained and well-equipped workforce plays a huge role in your prevention and human performance efforts.

Like professional sports athletes, [your industrial athletes](#) need to be healthy and fit to perform their job. They need to be engaged with their work. They need to be empowered to perform their job well with education/training, early intervention and involvement in the ergonomics process.

In Conclusion

Don't make the biggest mistake of all – to do nothing.

Second, beware the easy mistake of losing focus on musculoskeletal health and implementing programs targeting musculoskeletal health independently of each

other. Your process needs to be comprehensive in nature and integrated for best results.

To achieve maximum human performance at your facility, you will need an [effective ergonomics process](#) *and* a strategy to improve employee health, fitness and engagement.

Think prevention!

How to Establish a Comprehensive and Integrated MSD Prevention Process

In the previous post in this series we outlined two of the biggest MSD prevention mistakes we see today.

1. **To do nothing.** To wait until someone develops an MSD and then treat them with surgery, prescription medications, etc.
2. **To implement programs**

independently of each other. Many companies try to implement ergonomics, pre shift stretching, employee education, wellness and many other programs aimed at improving musculoskeletal health independently of each other. This results in an unorganized and inefficient approach.



Over two decades of experience has taught us that a comprehensive and integrated approach will get the best results in the long run.

These programs need to work together to reduce injury risk and promote worker health and human performance.

Maximum human performance is achieved at the intersection of good workplace design and a healthy, fit and engaged workforce.



A comprehensive process is one that:

1. Improves workplace design through a systematic [ergonomics improvement process](#), and
2. Creates a healthy, fit and engaged workforce through a systematic education and training process, early intervention and involving workers in the ergonomics improvement process.

How do you get there?

That's what we're about to cover. Let's dig in.

Commit to Prevention

First, leadership at your plant has to be 100% committed to the prevention process. As Tom Peters once said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." If leadership doesn't fully commit, it will be an uphill battle to build the culture you need to implement a comprehensive and integrated prevention strategy.

Identify one person to be the "MSD Prevention Champion" – *if you're reading this, that's probably you!*

(How's your culture? Find out here – [25 Signs You Have an Awesome Safety Culture.](#))

Conduct an Initial Audit

To start building your blueprint for success, you need to know how advanced your current process is in order to make improvements. A good start would be to download our [comprehensive annual audit](#). You'll get a score from 0 to 100 for each element of the E+ System and an overall grade for your process.

From there, you can identify your strengths and learn where you need additional help.

Establish Written MSD Prevention Guidelines

Written guidelines need to be established for your MSD prevention process and communicated to all employees. This provides a clear blueprint and plan for success. Without written guidelines, your process will blow over in whichever direction the wind is traveling on that particular day.

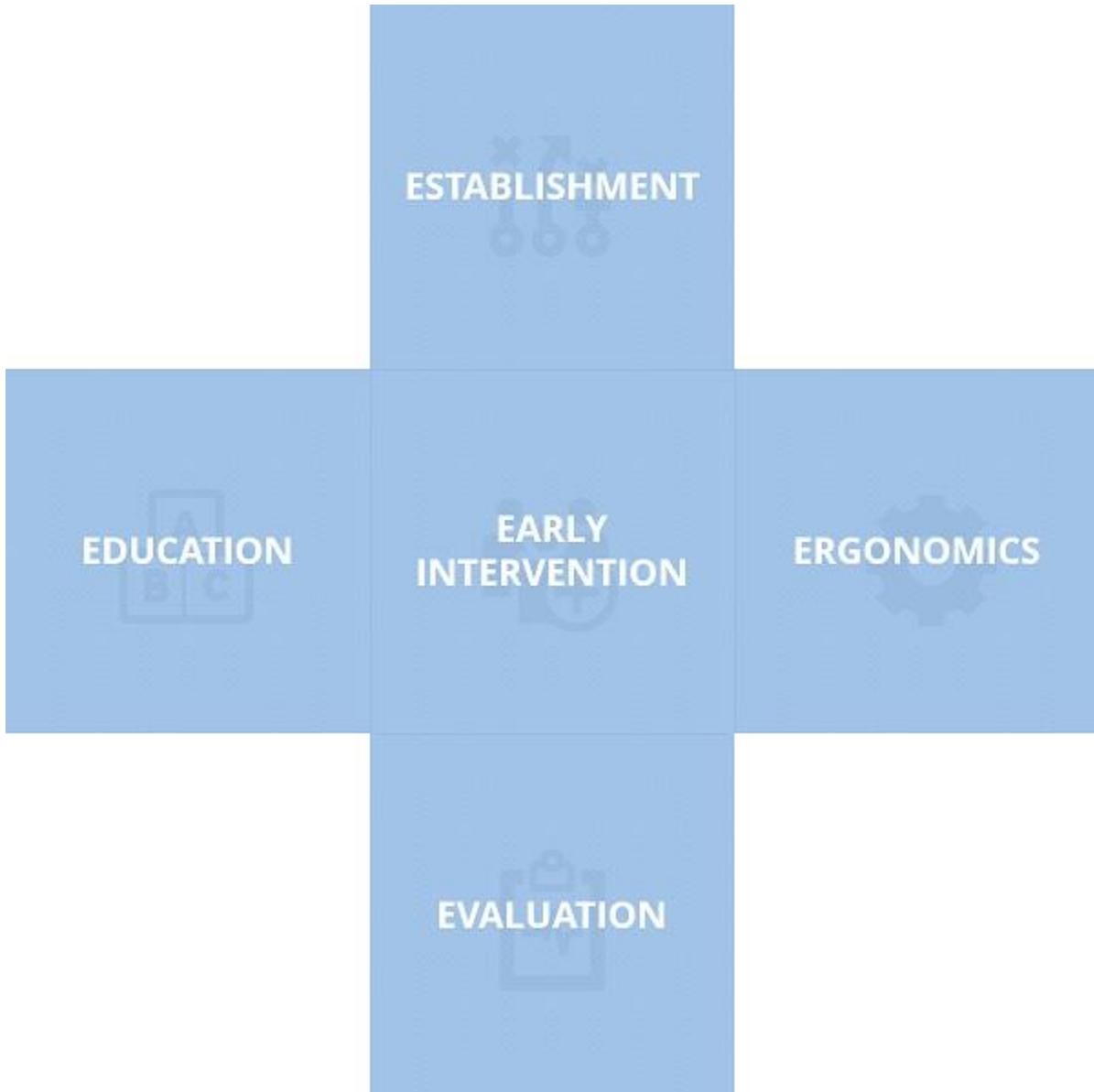
Assign and Communicate Process Responsibilities

Within your written guidelines, you should include specific roles and responsibilities for everyone at your facility. Communicate these early and often, and make it clear how each party will be held responsible for getting their job done.

Conduct Initial Training

Conduct initial training to educate and empower each individual to be successful at meeting their role and responsibility. A well-equipped and well-trained workforce is critical to this process.

Establish the E+ System



Establishment. Establishment is the element you're currently reading about and working through. This is the foundation and lasting blueprint for success. It begins with a long-term vision that prevention is better than treatment and ends with a culture of safety, wellness and human performance that is hungry for continuous improvement.

Education. Education and training ensures you have a well-trained and well-equipped workforce to support the process. Group training and one-on-one follow up sessions make sure the message is getting through and that learning objectives are being translated into real-world skills.

Early Intervention. We know that MSDs develop over the course of time – this means that the early warning signs of future injuries are present in your workforce today. Early intervention is a proactive strategy to discover early warning signs of future injuries and put control measures in place to prevent them.

Ergonomics. The ergonomics improvement process systematically identifies and removes ergonomic risk factors contributing to MSDs. The goal is to make continuous improvement to the workplace to make sure each workstation is within the capabilities and limitations of the employee you are asking to do the job.

Evaluation. Results are the name of the game. Monthly and annual evaluations of the process provide insight for continuous improvement opportunities and proof of the effectiveness of the process.

All of these elements must be implemented together and work in harmony to achieve the best results!

Additional elements of the E+ System not specifically mentioned above but worth mentioning here are:

- [Building wellness](#) into the lives of workers and their families
- [Job rotation](#) evaluation
- Pre-shift stretching
- Return to work guidelines
- [Workplace Athletic Training](#) / Sports Medicine Model of injury prevention and human performance

In Conclusion

Establishing a culture of safety, wellness and human performance at your facility won't happen overnight. It's a process that takes time and energy. Establishing the process described above will get you there.

It's worth the effort.

Think prevention!

About Ergonomics Plus



Ergonomics Plus was founded in 1989 as a one-man operation with the mission of preventing costly and painful musculoskeletal (soft tissue) injuries and improving human performance for local companies. Since those humble beginnings, we've grown into a nationwide consultancy, helping thousands of people across the United States remain healthy and productive at work every day.

Although we continue to grow and evolve as a company, our mission has never changed: We're dedicated to helping you and the workers at your company achieve high levels of human performance.