

PHYSICAL DEMANDS OF PRACTICING THE PROFESSION AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROFESSION

Overview of Ergonomic Recommendations for Cosmetology

As a cosmetologist you will be spending long hours standing, bending, reaching, and repeating the same motions. Any repeated activities can cause fatigue and pain in various parts of the body, sometimes even serious injury. Some aches, pains, and injuries develop slowly over a long period of time. In many cases, health challenges could have been prevented through improved posture, better work habits, and proper equipment. A science called ergonomics looks at how you do your work, what body movements, positions, tools, and equipment. To support these health issues while facilitating longer productivity in your salon career.

You need to be aware of the recommendations for preventing problems with the hand, wrist, shoulder, neck, back, foot, and leg. The science of ergonomics provides ideas for designing the space we work in and the equipment we use so they are easier on the human body. Developing the correct habits at the beginning of your training is the best way to get started in the right direction.

Posture

Good posture not only improves your personal appearance by presenting your figure to advantage and creating an image of confidence, it also prevents fatigue and many other physical problems. Because you will be spending most of your time on your feet when working as a professional cosmetologist, good posture should be developed as early as possible through regular exercise and self-discipline.

Basic Stance for Women:

- Place most of your weight on your right foot and point your toes straight ahead in a line.
- Place your left heel close to the heel or instep of your right foot and point the toes slightly outward.
- Bend your left knee slightly inward.

Basic Stance for Men:

- Place your feet apart, but not wider than your shoulder width.
- Distribute your weight evenly over both feet.
- Your knees should be neither rigid nor bent.
- Your toes should point ahead or one or both feet should point slightly outward.
- For a more relaxed stance, bend one knee slightly while shifting some of your weight to the opposite foot.

Neck and Back

Your spine runs from the top of your neck to your lower back. It is made up of many bones called vertebrae. Between each pair of vertebrae are joints and discs that give your neck and back flexibility, so they can move.

Discs are flexible because they have substance - like jelly - inside. Both joints and discs can be hurt if you strain or squeeze them. Prolonged bending or twisting of your body can cause pain in your neck, back, arms, or legs, especially if a disc ruptures (the jelly inside leaks out).

Neck and Back Strain can occur if you:

- Bend forward when giving a shampoo or haircut.
- Twist your body to get closer to a client or to reach for something.
- Reach overhead for supplies.
- Arch (lean backward) because you've been standing for a long time.
- Stand for a long time in high-heeled shoes.

Recommendations to prevent neck and back problems include:

1. Work with your back straight. Bend at the hips instead of the waist (a straight back bend).
2. Use a free standing sink for shampooing, so you can reach the client's hair without twisting. (These are sometimes called backwash systems).
3. Adjust the heights of the client's chair.
4. Tilt the client's head to a position that is comfortable for you.
5. Work with the client standing up if their hair is very long.
6. Bend your knees slightly and pull in your abdominal muscles when you have to reach up. Called a pelvic tilt, this motion keeps you from arching backward.
7. When you stand for long periods of time, place one foot on a stool or on a rung under the client's chair.
8. Avoid high-heeled shoes.
9. Stand on a footstool when you reach for supplies on a high shelf.

Foot and Leg

If you stand for a long time, your feet and ankles may swell and you have more risk of getting varicose veins (swollen veins). Also, if any part of your foot is under pressure, you can get calluses or skin irritation at the pressure point.

Foot and leg problems can occur if you:

- Stand for long periods, especially on a hard floor.
- Wear high-heeled shoes, especially if the toes are pointed.
- Wear shoes with poor arch support and hard soles.
- Wear shoes that don't fit well.

Recommendations to prevent foot and leg problems include:

1. Don't stand for long periods without sitting. Change positions frequently. Use a stool or moveable seat, if necessary, to rest your feet while you work with a client.
2. Raise your feet on a stool when you take a break.
3. Wear comfortable, rubber-soled shoes with good arch support.
4. Use shock-absorbing inserts inside your shoes.
5. Avoid shoes with high heels or pointed toes. They increase pressure on the toes and jam them into the front of the shoe.
6. Use a cushioned floor mat to reduce the fatigue of standing on a hard floor.
7. Use support hose to reduce leg swelling.
8. Hydraulic chairs for clients should adjust up and down at least five inches.

Hands and Wrists

Most of these muscles that move on your hand and fingers are actually in your forearm. These muscles are connected to the hand and fingers by tendons, which are like cords passing through your wrist. Tendonitis occurs when the tendons get inflamed.

The main causes of tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome are:

- Bending your wrist a lot.
- Pinching or gripping with force.
- Repeating a motion over and over.

You may bend your wrist a lot or use forceful pinching or gripping motions when you:

1. Cut hair, hold a hair dryer or use a round brush, curler, or curling iron.
2. Cut with shears that don't fit your hand.
3. Cut with shears that are dull or not lubricated properly.
4. Curl with a hot iron.
5. Use a comb that doesn't glide smoothly.

Recommendations to prevent hand and wrist problems include:

1. Adjust the height of the chair. Lower it to work on the crown of the head and raise it to work below ear level. To avoid bending your wrist, the chair should go up and down at least five inches.
2. Tilt the client's head so you don't have to bend your arm, hand, or wrist as much.
3. Use sharp shears that fit your hand and that are correctly adjusted and lubricated. You'll be able to make fewer cuts, and you won't need to apply as much force for each cut you make.
4. Use hair cutting techniques that help you keep your wrists straight.

Shoulders

Your shoulder has muscles and tendons. They also have bursa, which are sacs filled with fluid. If you strain your shoulder, you can get muscle aches, tendonitis, or bursitis. It's easy to strain your shoulder if you often hold your arm stretched away from your body or if you often hold your arm up, with your elbow above shoulder height.

You may strain your shoulder when you:

- Reach up to cut, dry or curl the crown of the head.
- Reach across the client's body to shampoo or dry hair.
- Reach for shears and combs on the counter.
- Reach for supplies on a high shelf.
- Hold heavy clippers, especially if your arm is stretched out or raised.

Recommendations to prevent shoulder problems include:

1. Adjust the height of the chair when you work on a client so that your arms are close to your sides.
2. Swivel the chair and get as close to the client as possible.
3. Tilt the client's head to a position that is comfortable for you.
4. Hold your tools so you don't have to raise your arms.

Safety Requirements

Almost all hair care and beauty professionals encounter safe and healthy hazards. Students will be exposed to chemicals, hazardous or not common, which are found in shampoos and conditioners, hair colorings, bleaches, chemical hair relaxers and permanent wave solutions. Certain tools such as thermal irons, hair dryers, razors, and scissors may cause skin cut, skin burn, and/or electric shock, if proper precautions are not taken into consideration.