



ARE YOU PRACTICING GOOD ERGONOMICS?

Scheduling/Repetitiveness

- Do you perform two consecutive difficult scalings or cleanings?** *Alternate these in your schedule so they aren't consecutive.*
- Do you see more than eight patients a day for scalings/cleanings?** *Consider ideas to allow breaks or reduce load. Intersperse other duties such as x-raying, filing, etc.*
- Do you use ultrasonic cleaners without a 30-minute break between uses?** *Take stretch breaks. Try to reconfigure your schedule.*

Posture

- Are your shoulders elevated, or one higher than the other, when working?** *Keep your shoulders even. Use a neutral posture. Try armrests. Use frequent stretch breaks.*
- Is your lower back unsupported when you are sitting?** *Adjust your chair to make sure that it supports your back. Stretch your back frequently, especially between patients.*
- Do you turn your head to the side to look in your patients' mouths?** *Practice a neutral posture. Change your patients' chair height or ask your patients to turn their heads instead.*
- Are your wrists flexed, extended, or angled to the side when using tools?** *Use a different tool approach angle to keep your wrists in neutral. Change your patients' chair height so you can keep a neutral posture. Use ergonomic tools.*
- When you type at your computer, are your wrists extended or unsupported?** *Change your chair or keyboard height so that your shoulders are relaxed with your elbows at 90° angles and your wrists in a neutral position. Consider investing in a soft wrist pad, ergonomic keyboard, and adjustable keyboard tray. Try to take frequent mini-breaks every 10-15 minutes to stretch your fingers.*

Force

- Do you grip tools too hard or constantly without a break, causing your hands to hurt?** *Practice using a minimal grip. Use ergonomic tools with large textured handles. Do hand stretching when reaching for tools. Change between tools every few seconds. Ensure tools are sharp. Use left-handed and right-handed gloves rather than ambidextrous gloves. Increase pressure only when deposits are engaged or in the early stages of root planing.*
- Do you grip polishing tools too tightly?** *Try to put the cord over your shoulder or arm to balance the tool. Initiate the purchase of more ergonomically friendly tools.*
- Is your treatment area cold or do your fingers get cold to the touch?** *Wear a sweater or long-sleeve shirt to keep your muscles warm. Wash your hands in warm water to maintain a 77° finger temperature. Exercise your hand with therapy putty to warm up your muscles between patients.*
- Do your leisure activities require forceful or repetitive gripping?** *Be aware of your body and its limitations. Reduce your exposure time by taking more breaks. If available, purchase tools or equipment that place less stress on your body.*

Adapted from Colangelo, G. & Belenky, M. (1990). Performance logic: A key to improving dental practice. Journal of Dental Administration, pp. 173-177.