

The holidays are a joyous time of year but can also be stressful when rushing to wrap your Christmas gifts all in one night! Bad posture while wrapping gifts can result in a "repetitive stress injury," which is an injury caused by overuse or exerting too much stress on a body part. Gift wrapping challenges your body because once a year you potentially will wrap gifts for hours during the Christmas season.

Repetitive stress injuries of the wrist and hand from writing, folding and cutting can cause bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, writer's cramp, cramping and blisters. In order to decrease your risks take breaks every thirty minutes to change positions and move around to get the blood flowing. Also, make a conscious effort to keep your hands in middle ground, not too far away and not too close to your body, which allows your arms, shoulders, and trunk to share the load. In addition, this keeps your joints in the middle of their range of motion, which also increases blood flow! Use ergonomic tools for wrapping presents and be sure to cut with scissors sized for your hands! Attempt to maintain a healthy posture while wrapping presents.

Other common mistakes made while wrapping gifts are sitting/kneeling on the floor. Avoid sitting and kneeling because both require you to maintain a bent position which puts stress on the neck and back. Also, sitting on a hard floor while bending forward with your legs stretched out or crossed in front of you, restricts blood flow. A good solution is to sit down in a chair at a table or stand at a counter top that is set at a comfortable height. When standing or sitting engage in a pelvic tilt (pull abdomen in), contract stomach muscles, and make a conscious effort to keep shoulders back and relaxed. In addition, place all materials within reach to avoid leaning. If you are standing up, it is also important to wear supportive shoes and refrain from locking your knees. Also, avoid standing in one place for long periods of time. Make a conscious effort to shift your weight from one foot to the other. If you are sitting in a chair, sit in a chair that provides firm back support and refrain from sitting with legs crossed. Much like standing, avoid sitting for longer than thirty minutes at a time. On your breaks, take time to get up and walk around the room.

Loading and unloading big packages can seem harmless, but individuals are often careless when doing so. There are a few things to keep in mind when lifting packages. The first thing to keep in mind is to stand close to the load and center yourself over it with your feet shoulder width apart. Also, be sure to tighten your abdominal muscles while keeping your back straight and knees bent. Before lifting make sure you have a good grasp on the load with both hands. While keeping the load close to your body, use your leg muscles to stand up lifting the load. Make a conscious effort to keep your back straight throughout lifting, using only the muscles in the legs to lift the load. It is also very important to not twist your body when moving the load. Instead take small steps with your feet turning until you are in the correct position.

We hope this information helps you to enjoy your holidays! Keep safe, Merry Christmas, and God Bless!

PRI 45 hits for Care of Low Back Disorders

<http://ergonomics.about.com/od/christmas/qt/wrappingrsi.htm>

<http://ergonomics.about.com/od/treatmentprevention/tp/prevwristrsi.htm>

<http://physicaltherapy.about.com/od/ergonomics/qt/SafeLifting.htm>

The health information contained herein is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace discussions with a healthcare provider. Decisions regarding patient care must be made with a healthcare provider, considering the unique characteristics of the patient.

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