Ease Your Pain

In kitchens there are tasks that can cause back pain or upper limb injuries that can affect hands, wrists, shoulders and neck.

- When staff continuously stand in one position (called a static posture), while cooking or preparing food, pooling of blood in the lower extremities may occur leading to muscle fatigue and pain.

- Prolonged standing on hard work surfaces such as concrete can create contact trauma and pain in the feet.

- Awkward neck postures, from constantly tilting the head downward or upward to cook/prepare/serve food, can lead to neck strains and muscle stiffness.

- Repeatedly lifting the arms or over-reaching can irritate the shoulder, possibly leading to arm and shoulder strain.

- Performing hand-intensive tasks (such as chopping, stirring, and scooping) with a bent wrist creates considerable stress on the tendons of the wrist and can lead to irritation and swelling.

Here are some suggestions to follow that will help prevent injuries and may ease your pain:

✓ Avoid static postures by continually changing your position. Use a foot rest bar or a low stool to help alter your posture by raising one foot and then the other.

✓ Use anti-fatigue mats, if available, on hard work surfaces. Anti-fatigue mats help contract and expand the muscles of the person standing on them increasing blood-flow and reducing fatigue.

✓ Wear shoes with well-cushioned insteps and soles.

✓ If possible, vary your activities to space out repetitive tasks.

✓ Make stretching a part of your daily routine.

✓ Avoid awkward postures. For example, reposition tasks in front of you rather than reaching above or behind your body to get supplies.

✓ Minimize reaching by organizing your work environment so that most cooking processes can be completed within easy reach and while keeping your elbows in close to your body.

✓ Use mechanical aids for chopping, dicing, or mixing foods (such as food processors and mixers) rather than hand chopping or mixing.

✓ If feasible, reduce the amount of chopping tasks by purchasing ready-made salads, pre-sliced onions and vegetables, and other pre-prepared foods.