

## ***Restaurant Safety – Strain and Sprain Prevention***

Serving food and bussing tables, especially while assuming awkward postures, may lead to back, neck, and shoulder strains and sprains. Specific potential hazards include:

- Balancing or lifting too many plates or glasses while serving or clearing tables.
- Balancing or lifting heavy trays above shoulder height.
- Lifting large, overfilled containers of dirty dishes.
- Repetitive reaching across tables to serve customers or to clear tables.
- Moving and lifting tables and chairs to accommodate customers.

### Possible Solutions

- Avoid awkward postures if you must carry trays, plates, or beverages. Serving with awkward postures such as unsupported elbow and finger postures can increase your risk for injury.
- Limit the number of plates or items you will carry. Keep in mind that carrying more than a couple items puts excessive strain on your arms and back and may lead to injury.
- Use both hands to carry items such as coffee pots or water jugs and carry them with your elbows close into your body.
- Move the glass or cup to you, when pouring, rather than overreaching with a heavy coffee pot or water jug to fill a glass.
- Carry plates with your elbows close into your body to lessen the strain on your arms and back. Avoid bending at the wrist or extending upward at the fingers. Your shoulder, arms, and hands should be in a neutral position rather than bent at the wrist or extended upward at the fingers.
- Balance the tray on both your arm and hand. \_Alternate carrying tasks from hand to hand.
- Balance the load evenly, placing heavier items in the center of the tray.
- Make sure trays are serviceable, clean, dry and without defect before each use.
- Stand by the person you are serving if possible, rather than reaching across tables and over people. In booths, pass the plates along, requesting that the people sitting closest to the edge of the booth assist you in passing the plates.
- Get help to move tables and chairs, rather than lifting alone.
- If space permits, provide serving carts to carry food, rather than requiring workers to carry heavy trays overhead. Furthermore, provide workers with a server's station close to the serving area. This will decrease the distance that items need to be carried.

**Contact Your CompWest Loss Control Consultant  
If You Have Any Questions or Need Assistance**