



Cut to the Chase!

ERGONOMIC TIPS FOR THE EMPLOYER

EU Project ErgoHair VS/2017/0077

ergoHair



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THE EMPLOYERS

All recommendations for the employees are also applicable to the employers.

Employers have more impact on the working conditions than the employees.

That is why **some additional recommendations** are valid.

1. Keep participating in lifelong learning (training and education)

- Ensure that during your entire career you keep maintaining the ergonomic techniques by frequently following a refresher course
- Follow during your entire career training in 'new' ergonomic techniques

2. Be a good coach and mentor for future hairdressers

- Give the right example and good coaching and tips to future hairdressers.

3. Take care of your body

a) Constantly spend attention to a good posture:

- Avoid repetitive straining movements of the upper limbs and reduce working with raised hands and arms
- Avoid working above shoulder height (angles > 60° or > 90°) and adjust the hairdressing chair to the right height
- Use normal arm positions and movements when you are manually working with equipment
- Work less on physical boundaries, and respect your own limits
- Reduce intensive strains and pressures on the hands
- Reduce constant muscle activity
- Use the mirrors in the hairdressing salon to check your posture

b) Use good working techniques, such as:

Palm to palm method (Netherlands):

- This is a specifically designed working technique to reduce the pressure on the hands, arms, shoulders and back. Because of this the upper arms can remain low and the wrists can remain in a more or less neutral position.

PI BY RP method (France):

- Interactive training method developed by Raphaël Perrier, 2010; application available from September 2017). The idea is to – based on a 3D simulation – get a better insight into why certain actions are done, to reduce the number of cutting motions.

Because of the new working technique, only 30-40 cutting motions are needed for each hairstyle, as opposed to the 150 cuts which are required in the traditional cutting method.

The manual allows to train virtually. The own hairstyle can also be converted to a 3D image. The manual is available through a QR-code and the videos can be used on different mobile devices.

c) Use the right equipment. Use the ergonomic material the right way. Maintain the material well.

- Do not be impatient and ensure the right adjustment/height of the hairdressing chair, backwash unit (elbow height), hairdressing saddle stool. . .
- Use a trolley to keep your equipment close and at the right height. Make sure to put the trolley on the right side. If you are righthanded, put the trolley also to your right.
- Use the hairdressing saddle stool
 - Use a pony saddle (no round saddle) or a bicycle saddle (if you are short)
 - Use the saddle stool to turn around the customer without bending your torso.
 - Do not slouch on it
 - You cannot use the saddle stool for all activities. Feel and decide for yourself when the use isn't possible.
 - If you have to reach a lot, go back to standing.

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- Adapt the hairdryer to the type of hair
- Make sure that the scissors are sharpened and maintained well, so you have to use less force.
- Take care of the equipment so you can use well maintained material for a long time.
- Wear closed shoes, preferably with shoelaces and a heel of maximum 3 cm to avoid hurt and swollen feet. If you think you have an abnormality to your feet, consult an orthopaedist.

d) Ask the customer for cooperation

e) Do enough exercises (see further)

f) Announce health complaints better and faster

- Realise that it is important to also monitor your health yourself, and to analyse your own body.
- Definitely report your problem to the doctor (often people wait too long to report or don't report at all)

4. Ensure balanced work

a) Provide for a bigger variation in the type of work

Augment the diversity in tasks.

b) Change between standing and sitting working positions

Provide for a better variation between standing and sitting.

c) Take enough breaks

d) Avoid addiction to work

e) Keep a work-life balance

5. Maintain a healthy lifestyle

It is a very well-known notion that hairdressers do not have the most healthy lifestyle.

a) Avoid unhealthy products and habits to prevent MSD

- Avoid unhealthy habits such as smoking, drugs, excessive drinking etc. because they decrease the strength of the immune system.

b) Do movement exercises, sport...

A good physique lowers the risk of MSD to the back and prevents stress

- Start with achievable exercises, which everybody can do under normal circumstances
- Try to do these exercises regularly

c) Use relaxation techniques against stress (straining and stressing of the body)

The hairdressing profession is also a psychologically demanding profession with a lot of stress because of the time pressure and because hairdressers always want to satisfy their customers. Customers notice it when hairdressers are stressed and they often take over that stress from the hairdresser. To avoid this:

- Do breathing exercises
- Do yoga

...

d) *Keep healthy nutrition in mind*

A balanced diet has an impact on potential MSD's.

- Definitely have breakfast in the morning and do not skip meals, so that you possess enough energy to be sufficiently alert during work (see peak of accidents just before noon, which is associated with a lack of food and sufficient sleep)
- Make sure you have a balanced combination of proteins, carbs and fats. Eat a lot of vegetables, fruit, ...
- Eat multiple times per day, but eat smaller portions
- Use the 80% rule: eat until you are 80 % satisfied, because your brain needs time to register the feeling.
- Eat in a calm and quiet place, without too much distraction
- Also pay enough attention to an attractive presentation of the food

e) *Drink enough water (hydration)*

- Only drink water and no sodas
- Regularly drink to avoid a broad scope of illnesses and afflictions.

f) *Have enough sleep and rest*

The better your quality of sleep, the better you are suited to deal with stress. Sufficient sleep is not only important for general health, but also to avoid accidents.

g) *Also keep in your private life a good posture and healthy lifestyle*

6. Contribute to a pleasant working environment and a positive atmosphere at work

7. Be well prepared when (re)decorating the hairdressing salon

Most likely, the most practical way to start working more ergonomically is when you are going to buy new material, or when you wish to renew your hairdressing salon, or make it more accessible for people with disabilities.

- Inform yourself well on prevention and wellbeing: consult among others the OIRA tool and different suppliers,...
- Make sure that all relevant 'information' concerning organisation, quality, functionality, technique and finances is present in advance.
- Certainly determine in advance all the 'requirements' concerning equipment, space, number of chairs, breaks and storage areas.

8. Provide for a responsible 'architecture of the hairdressing salon'

Do not only think about aesthetic aspects, but also about ergonomic aspects and the wellbeing of the hairdressers.

- Provide enough space so:
 - The hairdresser doesn't only stand 'behind' the customer but also 'next' to the customer and he is able to sufficiently move between the different objects.
(for a hairdressing work station – space hairdressing activity: 100 cm of work space behind the hairdressing chair and at least 75 cm between two chairs.)
 - The team can work in a sufficiently relaxed way within the available space (prevents stress).
- Make a simulation of design with 2 hairdressing work stations next to each other and check how much space overlaps.
- See about the right complementarity between the available space and the requirements
(*tendency to install as much chairs as possible, but in practice it is rarely possible to service such a large number of people at the same time*)
- Think about the functional proximity of the different areas and zones. Keep a fluent circulation of traffic between the different zones.
- Definitely keep the body height of the hairdresser in mind. Additional problems with MSD's mainly originate with short or very tall hairdressers.
- Keep into account the different types of customers and employees. Do not base yourself on the average type of person.

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- See to direct or indirect visibility of customers and colleagues (good lighting and mirrors).
- Use the right materials and colours when designing the interior (atmosphere, harmony) (*glass walls and mirrors increase the sense of space*).
- Provide enough hairdressing saddle stools to be able work seated.
- Keep enough trolleys at the work stations and behind the backwash unit to be able to have the materials at close hand.
- Use an easily accessible storage space for products. Never place your material in the corridor but always store material safely. Use shelves instead of cabinets.
- Provide for working surfaces in the laboratory which are adapted to the height of the employees. Provide two surfaces on different heights (one for taller and one for shorter employees)
- In general, tend to order and cleanliness at the shop floor.
- Use a stable and non-slip floor, without obstacles.
- Provide for the removal of polluted air and arrange a ventilation system.
- Keep the right temperature: neither too hot, nor too cold, avoid temperature fluctuations.
- Install good lighting: bad lighting with shaded areas can also lead to a bad posture or accidents.
- Design a separate room for staff where employees can relax and possibly stretch.
- Keep the stairways well-lit and in good condition, with a non-slip surface, with well-lit handrails at the right height and a solid construction.

9. Use ergonomic equipment and working material, that follows the ergonomic guidelines

Make sure you have the right and adjusted equipment at your disposal:

- Use a **good and adjustable hairdressing chair** (in which the customer sits)
See to it that the pumping mechanism is at the correct side, so you can also reach it easily with your feet.
Frequently adjust the right height during your work.
- Use a **good backwash unit**
 - The optimal working height during working at the backwash unit is around elbow height because during washing some use of force is required.
 - An ergonomic good chair/ backwash unit combination is also important.
- Use a **good hairdressing saddle stool**
Most backwash units are not adjustable in height, so the hairdressers have to keep themselves at the right working height.
For the tall hairdresser, it is best to use a hairdressing saddle stool. The short hairdresser can also work while standing. Also during job associated technical activities (for example, cutting, dyeing, permanent wave, bleaching) you should use a hairdressing saddle stool.
 - Use a pony saddle (**no round saddle**) or a bicycle saddle (if you are short).
 - Use the saddle stool to turn around the customer without bending the torso.
 - Do not slouch on it.
 - You cannot use the saddle stool for all activities. Feel and decide for yourself when its use isn't possible.
 - If you have to reach a lot, go back to standing.
- Use **good trolleys**
 - Use a trolley to keep your tools, (disposable) gloves and products close, except for those which are used in the laboratory, in order to have them with you at the right height.
 - Put the trolley on the correct side. If you are right, put the trolley on the right side as well.
- Use a **good hairdryer**
A hairdresser often has to dry hair. The process of drying hair is often very long and very taxing for arms, wrists and hands.
 - Adapt the material to the type of hair.

1) The Belgian hairdressing sector has created a floorplan that follows the guidelines for public buildings, with a focus on the design of the different necessary areas in the hairdressing salon.

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- Use **good scissors**
Well-adjusted scissors avoid that pressure on certain parts of the fingers become too excessive.
 - You are best to determine which scissors you use by basing it on the size and the shape of the hand, and the applied cutting technique.
 - Use sharp scissors so you have to use less force.
- Wear **good shoes**
 - If you think you have an abnormality to your feet, consult an orthopaedist.
- Offer a broad variety of equipment, because:
 - Equipment that the majority prefers, can be a bad choice for some.
 - It is good to motivate people to adopt an ergonomic style of work.
 - It guarantees the comfort of both hairdresser and the customers.
 - It ensures an optimal working height.
- Realise that equipment that reduces or takes away complaints, cannot prevent for 100 % that musculoskeletal complaints still occur (primary versus secondary prevention).

10. Keep a good organisation of tasks and work in mind

a) *Reflect on the organisation of work in advance:*

- Ensure a diversity of 'tasks' which have to be executed, taking into account the number of hairdressing stations/ backwash units/ specialisations present.
- Keep a good variety of 'position and posture' (sitting and standing work)
- Hold on to a realistic working rhythm. If possible, allow individual adjustments and choices.
- Implement enough breaks
- Maintain a normal room temperature
- Avoid addiction to work and see to a good work-life balance.
- Deeply think about the methods for welcoming customers, offering extra services (sales of products, other services...)
- ...

b) *Increase flexibility of work by, for example, spending enough attention towards making appointments and thinking about the opening hours:*

- When working with appointments: this helps to improve the workload and to anticipate activities
- When working without appointments: respect the time required for the healthy and correct completion of the work.
- Closing of the hairdressing salon during lunch: this improves a healthy and qualitative lunch.
- If you are not closing the hairdressing salon during lunch: set up a rotary system during the lunch breaks (number of customers who arrive can increase)

c) *Spend sufficient attention towards training and education for good working techniques for your colleagues.*

11. Provide for good coaching of student-hairdressers in the salon

Young or future hairdressers are being trained both in educational institutions, and at work. Often these young hairdressers do not yet possess enough professional and practical experience.

- Stress that it is important for them to monitor their health.
- Give good tips and be a good mentor, because good assistance is essential for their health and success.
- As supervisor of the hairdressing salon, also keep following ergonomic training yourself.

12. Cooperation and involvement of the team (good coaching of your colleagues)

The fitter and more alert your employees are, the better the chance that they will show a greater sense of involvement. A relaxed body improves the creativity of the employees and it allows them to work without stress.

- Maintain good communication between all employees so that employees take on the right attitude during their daily activities.
- Maintain a good team spirit and ensure commitment of the team.
- Adapt your choice of material to your staff as well.
- Make the employees aware about learning to analyse their own body.
- Ensure that employees coach each other and that they speak out about it if someone is working in a wrong posture (for example by calling their name)
- Provide easy movement graphics with exercises to keep the muscles and joints supple (can be hung on the walls of the relaxation room in the hairdressing salon)
- Do regular evaluations. Discuss in an easy and playful manner and pay attention to problems that are troubling the employees.
- Take it seriously when someone says they have pain.
- Where possible, follow fashion trends, for example for the use of ergonomically responsible shoes (use fashionable shoes with insoles)
- Be an example for your colleagues. Listen to them, do not encourage negative aspects, but anticipate and reaffirm positive aspects.
- Continue to provide support, for example for the purchasing of new material (such as scissors). Give employees the freedom of choice, but also the necessary support in terms of advice (for example, suggest that scissors shouldn't be too large)
- Organise a brainstorming session on safety and health with your employees in case of a make-over project (redesign of the hairdressing salon)
- Build a type of 'community', that motivates people to also maintain a healthy lifestyle.

RELATION WITH THE CUSTOMER

The posture of the customers can also play a role for the ergonomics of the hairdressers. Communicate with customers about safety and ergonomics in the hairdressing salon, in order for the customers to become aware that they are in the hands of a good hairdresser. Strive for cooperation with the customer for everything that concerns *the sitting position of the customer and the sitting or standing position of the hairdresser*.

Aim for a win-win situation for everybody and ask the client to adjust their posture so that the hairdresser has to assume less uncomfortable postures.