

## Boomers Beware! (Week 4)

### The 'Mighty' Old

While the average age of your workforce is probably over 50, what age do you think the jobs in your company are designed for? Has anyone ever considered the physical changes in your workforce over the years or does everyone just scratch their head when injuries occur? The following are the changes that creep up on us as we age:

#### Muscles

- Decreased muscle mass and strength (After the age of 40, various studies show that you lose between 15 to 46% of your strength)
- Reduced bone mass (bone mass decreases up to 30% for females and 15 % for males by age 60)
- Loss of 1 cm per decade in height after the age of 30 from thinning back discs.
- Reduced range of motion (ROM) and flexibility
- Reduced endurance (the older worker has 60-80% less endurance or aerobic capacity than a 20 year old)
- Increased recovery time needed for many working tissues
- Increased muscle response time and fatigue
- Older people may find it harder to maintain good posture and balance

#### What to do?

- Try to keep work in "neutral zone" (between knee and shoulder level, close to the body)
- Continue or begin regular exercise program
- Change positions regularly and stretch the upper body throughout the day
- Allow self paced work and opportunity for breaks
- Design and plan work that eliminates twisting and reduces work with static muscle effort (e.g. sustained positions)
- Seek simple solutions to accommodate physical limitations (there are many resources available)

