

THE INDUSTRIAL ATHLETE DIGEST

Weekly Wellness & Safety Tips from Work Right NW



VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 40 | ARCHIVE

SLEEP LIKE A PIG

BY CAROL MASS, LAT, ATC

Have you ever gone to sleep feeling fine, and woken up with pain or discomfort somewhere in your body? Some of my friends and I joke that it used to take physical exertion to get injured, now (at our age) all it takes is sleeping!

In the industrial setting, we discuss the ergonomics of doing our job tasks. We educate how proper body mechanics will help keep the body in good health and prevent injury. But beyond working for 8-12 hours a day, we are coached to do only one other thing for that amount of time - sleep. So if working with proper posture is important, then sleeping with proper body posture should be important too. Check out these tips to get better (and more injury-free) rest that will have you sleeping like a pig in no time!



SLEEP ERGONOMICS

Stop stomach sleeping. When you sleep on your stomach, you force your head to a 90° angle in any direction. Many people put their arms under their head or pillow to ease this angle, but this often causes a pinch in the nerves and muscles of the neck and shoulders. For these people, they can probably relate to waking up with their hand completely asleep



The Alignment of Your Head. If you are a side sleeper, line up your ears with your shoulders and your nose in line with your sternum. The best way to do this is to get the right pillow combination to fill the space between your shoulder and ear at perfect right angles and to lay your head down with your head back, not curled into fetal position.

Don't Sleep on Shoulders, Hands, or Arms. If you find yourself putting your arms under your head, your pillow isn't pulling its weight. Consider buying a new pillow or stacking up more than one to get better head support. Some pillows come with a space to put your arms if you are a side sleeper. Studies show that rubber or high density pillows result in less neck discomfort, and suggest to avoid feather pillows.

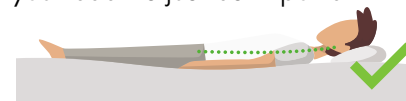
Shoulders Down. Hugging a pillow or putting a pillow behind your back when you side sleep helps place your arms without letting your shoulders sink up towards your head or curve in towards your chest (which can cause tight pec muscles). This placement may also help prevent you from rolling over onto your stomach as you try to quit that habit.



Rounding your shoulders around a pillow can cause neck and upper back discomfort throughout the day. Before you lay down on your side, pull your shoulders down and back. Then grab some more pillows to support your top arm so you do not round the top shoulder.

Your Hips and Spine Align. Avoid feeling like your hips are rocked up or down and use a pillow between your legs and feet, or place one knee/leg on top of a longer body pillow to help even the weight of your legs. Let your hips sit perpendicular to your low back when you sleep.

Pillow Size. Sleeping on your back can be very healthy, but make sure your pillow isn't too big. Your head shouldn't sit at an angle to your body. Some ergonomic pillows have an indentation to cradle your head. A foam roll or towel placed under the neck is useful to support the head. Head placement when sleeping on your back is just as important as side sleeping.



Carol Mass, LAT, ATC || Carol is a Certified Athletic Trainer with over 10 years of experience managing musculoskeletal injuries. She has worked in the high school, clinic and industrial settings. She spends her free time roller blading, hiking, and watching horror movies with her family, pet pig, and dogs.

Nandor is the family pet pig. He is a 3-year old mini pig, which means he is a healthy 150lbs. He enjoys eating foliage in his backyard and taking naps while cuddling with his parents and dog siblings. It's not uncommon for Nandor to sleep away 20 hours of the day! His motto is "if I'm not eating I'm sleeping!"

Work Right NW is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialists in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.

