

**DENTAL CARE**

# Dentists and dental hygienists

## Work pain-free!

Providing quality care may pose risks to your health and safety. You could develop musculoskeletal disorders. Starting today, avoid suffering by opting for safe postures and safe work practices.

**TO PROTECT YOUR MUSCLES AND YOUR JOINTS, YOUR BODY MUST REMAIN IN SYMMETRICAL AND NATURAL POSITIONS.**

### Your neck and your back

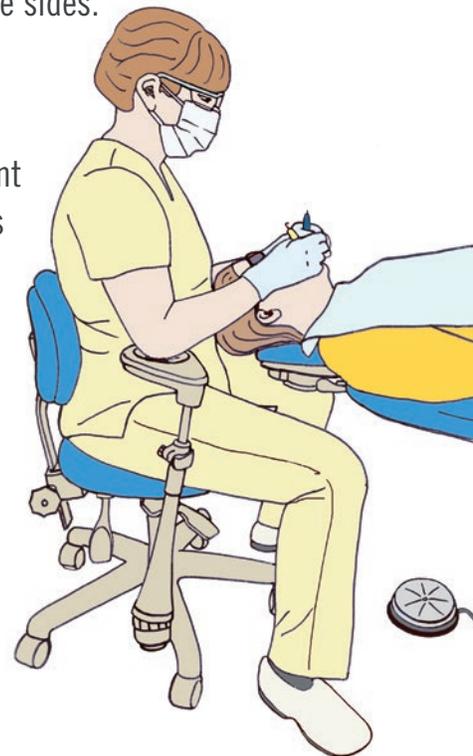
The challenge is to stay as upright as possible, facing your work area, without torsion or lateral flexion, the lower back well supported. Avoid bending the neck forward and to the sides.

### Your shoulders

Shoulder problems are common. To prevent them, it is necessary to reduce the efforts required to keep the arms elevated and limit the use of postures where the arms are kept apart from the body.

### Your elbows and your wrists

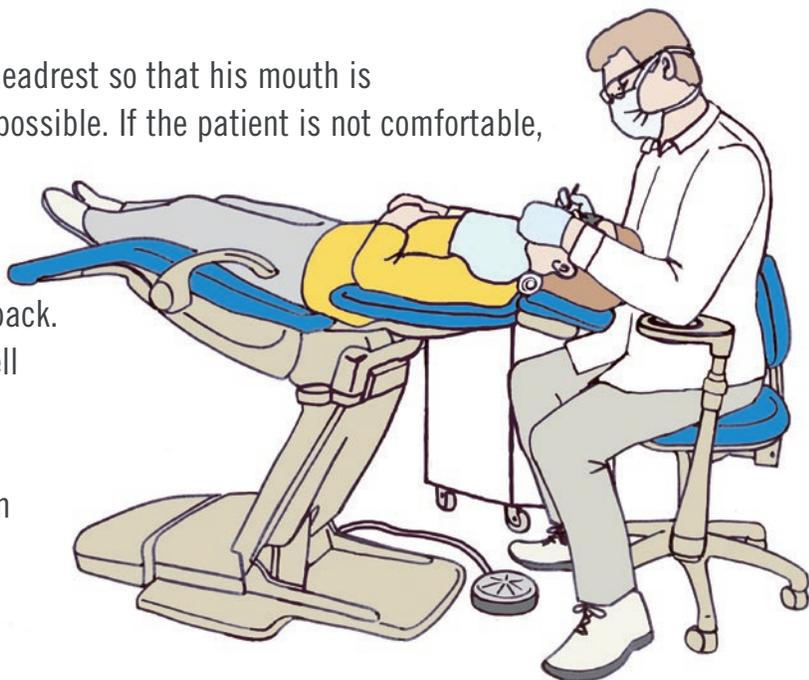
Extensions, flexions and deviations of the wrists (to the thumb or little finger), frequent or prolonged, can damage them and cause injuries to the elbows. Hand efforts to use the cleaning tools can damage the tendons.



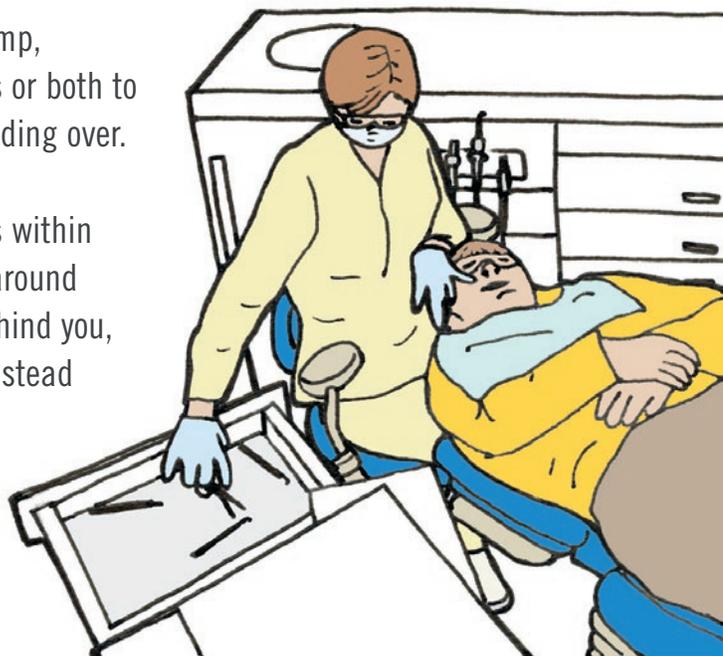
# PREVENTION TIPS

## Protect your neck and your back

- To help you raise your head and straighten your back, you can elevate the patient's chair as much as possible and lower the backrest horizontally so that the patient's head rests flat. This will allow you to easily place your legs under the chair.
- Ask the patient to move up to the end of the headrest so that his mouth is at the level of your plexus, as close to you as possible. If the patient is not comfortable, place a cushion under his knees.
- Adjust the height of the lumbar support and bring it forward into the hollow of your lower back. As much as possible, keep your lower back well supported during work.
- Work with a mirror (indirect vision) rather than leaning your head forward to see the areas to be treated.
- Ask the patient to turn his head as needed to increase your field of view.

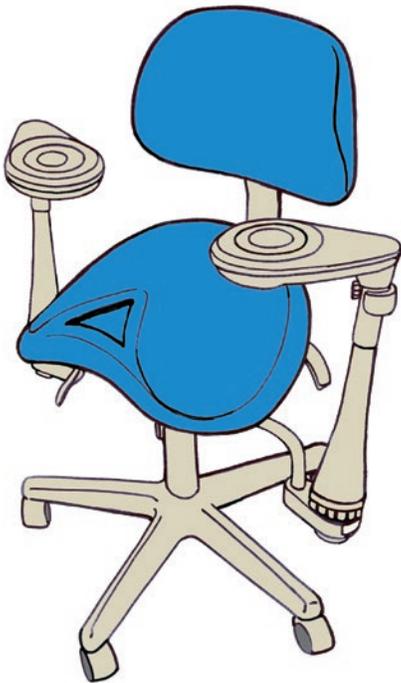


- In addition to the articulated arm lamp, use a headlamp, magnifying glasses or both to improve your vision and to avoid bending over.
- Place all your work tools within easy reach. If you turn around to take an accessory behind you, make a 180° rotation instead of twisting your back.



## Protect your shoulders

- Always prioritize positions that keep your arms close to your body. For example, work the majority of the time at the end of the headrest (right-handers should place their arms at 11 and 12 o'clock and left-handers should place them at 12 and 13 o'clock).



- To reduce static contractions related to precision tasks, you can equip your chair with padded elbow supports. Adjust the height and tension so that the elbow support remains stable and follows your movements without having to lift your shoulders.
- Place the tips of your elbows in the center of the support. Raise your forearms from 30° to 60° to access the patient's mouth.

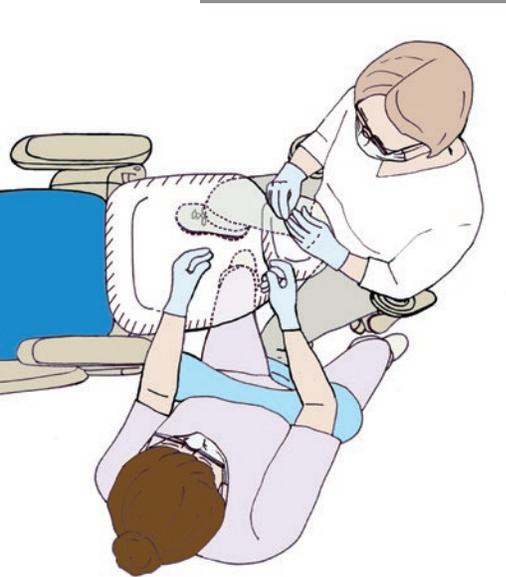


## Protect your elbows and your wrists

- Keep your wrists in a neutral position, your hands should be aligned with your forearms, like when shaking hands.
- Choose instruments with a big handle and use well sharpened curettes.
- Rest your fingers on the patient's face to be stable. This decreases the effort on your arm and shoulder and it prevents wrist flexion.



## When working with an assistant



When working with an assistant, she must also maintain a safe posture: neck and back without flexion or torsion, positioned in front of her work area.

She must have enough space under the patient's chair to place her legs. Interpose her knees with yours. Thus, you will both benefit from the recommended postures.



## Rest and relaxation

Even when applying all these recommendations, you will need some recovery time.

- Plan several breaks during your work day.
- During breaks and end of days, take time to complete one of the relaxation routines offered on the ASSTSAS website.

### After a patient and at every possible opportunity, complete this exercise

- 5 wide backwards rotations of the shoulders - breathe in as you lift your shoulders and exhale as you lower them
- 5 forward rotations of the shoulders - proceed in the same way
- Take deep abdominal breaths to relax the lumbar and dorsal areas

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

PROTEAU, Rose-Ange. *Guide de prévention des troubles musculosqueletiques (TMS) en clinique dentaire*, ASSTSAS, 2007 ([asstsas.qc.ca/publication/gp50](http://asstsas.qc.ca/publication/gp50))

PROTEAU, Rose-Ange. *Assistantes dentaires – Soignez vos postures de travail*, fiche technique, ASSTSAS, 2017 ([asstsas.qc.ca/FT20](http://asstsas.qc.ca/FT20))

Videos: relaxation routines (3 min, 8 min) and testimonials from hygienists, ASSTSAS ([asstsas.qc.ca/dossier-thematiques/cliniques-dentaires](http://asstsas.qc.ca/dossier-thematiques/cliniques-dentaires)).