

## Protect, Preserve, Plan for Change

Change is something you can count on, but sometimes you can anticipate it. Over time, wear and tear of everyday chores, repeating the same action over and over again, the natural process of aging, or a health condition can affect your body and your ability to work safely. It's possible to consider what conditions or changes are more likely to be a concern for you. Avoiding injury and using safe practices can reduce chronic pain later in life. Planning now can help you decrease the impact of these changes so they have less impact on your daily life.

| Area to consider:   | Concern? | Change to make?                 |
|---|----------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Back</b>   | ✓        | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Adjust your load height. Store items so you don't lift from the floor or pull down from over your head.   |          |                                 |
| Get help with the load. Use a dolly, cart or pallet jack.   |          |                                 |
| Sit to support your back. Feet should touch the floor, adjust the seat or use pedal extenders to reach pedals without strain. Replace old seats with ergonomic ones. Use lumbar support or gel cushions for seats.                    |          |                                 |
| Use folding extended side or back up mirrors to limit turning your head or twisting your back. Consider after-market cameras for an extra set of eyes.  |          |                                 |
| Avoid strain by adding an additional step so you don't jump down from equipment or have to pull up to get in.   |          |                                 |
| Upgrade your tools with ergonomic handles or add ergonomic grips to current tools already in use.   |          |                                 |
|   |          |                                 |
| <b>Joint Pain</b>   | ✓        | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Use anti-vibration gloves to absorb impact, maintain a good grip, and protect joints when using power tools, driving UTVs and machinery. The vibration of driving in the field or on rough roads contributes to daily fatigue.        |          |                                 |
| Avoid tools with pull starts and replace them with ones that use electric start (chain saws, brush hogs, etc.).   |          |                                 |
| Improve footing and avoid falls with concrete pads for work areas, around livestock chutes, and slippery areas.   |          |                                 |
| Modify repetitive activities – pay attention to numbness, tingling and loss of strength. Keep work surfaces at the right work height. Use lighter weight tools with impact absorbing handles. Work in a stable position. Take breaks. |          |                                 |

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| Maintain an appropriate body temperature in extreme cold or heat. Cold: warm, dry gloves; layer clothing; hats; insulated clothing; hand warmers; heated vest. Heat: lightweight clothing with UV protection; cooling vests and towels; take breaks in the shade. |   |                                 |
| <b>Vision loss, changes in field of vision</b>  | ✓ | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Use color contrast and texture to mark changes in surface or slope on a shop floor, on the front of steps on a porch or grain bin, or in doorways to walk and climb more safely.  |   |                                 |
| Improve task lighting in work areas. Improve overhead lighting in machine shops and outbuildings. Upgrade outdoor lighting for walking and driving safety.  |   |                                 |
| Mirrors mounted on machinery shed doorways or magnifying extended mirrors on machinery offer a wider field of vision and make objects larger.   |   |                                 |
| Ultra-violet (UV), color tinted glasses or safety reduce glare, improve day and night vision, and protect your vision. Wear glasses? Try UV, color tinted clip-ons.   |   |                                 |
| Painting work surfaces or tool handles a contrasting color to help you find them easily and identify which one you want quickly. Some sprays have texture for grip too.   |   |                                 |
| <b>Hearing loss</b>   | ✓ | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Get ear protection for noisy environments and operating machinery, especially older equipment. Be sure to provide for seasonal helpers including kids and grandkids.  |   |                                 |
| Use noise cancelling ear buds or ear phones to hear telephone conversations. Bone conduction earphones can transfer sound to your good ear to help you hear.  |   |                                 |
| Strobe light or vibrating signalers let you know your phone is ringing.   |   |                                 |
| An assistive listening device with earbuds can make environmental sounds and conversations easier to hear.  |   |                                 |
| <b>Memory</b>   | ✓ | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Keep lists. Use chalk paint on a workshop wall or put up a white board to make lists with dates when needed.  |   |                                 |

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| Use phone apps to keep a running list of items needed from the store/town to limit extra trips.   |   |                                 |
| Use your cell phone to set reminders to take medication, keep appointments or return calls.   |   |                                 |
| Use tag locators or tiles to keep track of things you need: phone, keys, toolbox, etc.  |   |                                 |
| Turn on “Find My Phone” so your family can locate what field you are in.  |   |                                 |
| Use phone app to set GPS boundaries so you know if someone is in the wrong place or if they wandered off.   |   |                                 |
|   |   |                                 |
| <b>Taking care of yourself</b>  | ✓ | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Stay hydrated and eat regularly when working.   |   |                                 |
| Get enough sleep; accidents occur when you’re not rested.   |   |                                 |
| Have allergies? Working with chemicals? Wear a respirator mask; they come in different styles and sizes.  |   |                                 |
| Stretch before you start chores. Consider farmer yoga.  |   |                                 |
| Do your feet or legs ache at the end of the day from standing and walking? Make sure you are wearing good supporting shoes or boots. Use anti-fatigue mats in the workshop. |   |                                 |
| Get an annual checkup. Agree on a health plan when needed.  |   |                                 |
| If a health condition is identified, how do you take care of yourself? Changes in diet? Medication? Checking your hands or feet routinely?                                  |   |                                 |
| Is a condition progressive? Does it usually move quickly or take years? How does it effect a person? Strength? Stamina? Mobility? Memory? Make changes now so you’re ready. |   |                                 |
|   |   |                                 |
| <b>Stress</b>   | ✓ | <i>Write it in this column.</i> |
| Use breathing exercises when you feel overwhelmed, stressed or tense. Breathing apps are available.   |   |                                 |
| Take time to slow down. Notice things around you – what you see, hear, smell, how something feels. Mindfulness and relaxation apps can help you practice.                   |   |                                 |

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| Check your stress level daily. Signs of stress include headaches, ulcers, problems sleeping, sadness, anger, anxiety, irritability, memory loss, and lack of coordination. |  |  |
| Get plenty of sleep and take breaks throughout the day.  |  |  |
| Schedule time to spend with family and friends, laughing is a great stress reliever.   |  |  |

Need more ideas? Have you thought of a possible change that's not addressed here? Contact Kansas AgrAbility staff for ideas, product information, or an on-site visit.