

# Spread Comfort and Joy with Ergonomic Gifts

By Nancy M. Lowe, MPT, CHT, CAE

Most of the leaves have fallen, there's a chill in the air and I see multicolored lights and big inflatable snowmen around the neighborhood. It must be time to think about holiday gifts. And what kind of gift is practical, healthful, calorie-free, and shows you care? An ergonomic gift, of course!

There are myriad choices of ergonomic gifts for people of varying interests, covering all price ranges.

For anyone who drives, a steering wheel cover can ease gripping, improve control and insulate the hands in hot or icy weather. But steer clear of the smooth stretchy kind that, though cute, may not improve the grip. And for those who use the automobile as a mini-office, look for car seat organizers and a hands-free mobile headset.

Care for the home or office laptop user on your list by giving a laptop holder that places the screen at eye level while a separate keyboard and mouse are used at or near elbow level. The aching neck of your bookworm or newspaper reader will thank you for giving a book-holder or document holder that angles reading material toward eye level. These can also be used at the computer and with recipe books in the kitchen.



A great stocking stuffer or casual gift is an ergonomic pen or pencil. Economical or pricey, they range from the disposable Bic, PaperMate, Pentel and other models with cushiony grips to the refillable Dr. Grip, PhD and deluxe gel-grip styles. You'll find these and many other choices at your pharmacy/variety stores, discount department stores, office supplies companies, or fine stationery stores.

For the gardener in your life, look for ergonomic stools, clippers, trowels, sprayers, and other equipment in a gardening shop or the garden section of your favorite hardware store. When shopping for gloves, consider those with rubberized palms. Try to choose the appropriate size for the user. This will provide the most comfortable and secure grip.

To ease work around the house, look for telescoping dusters, cobweb cleaners and a long-handled dustpan/broom set. A long-handled shoehorn kept near the shoes and boots can be useful for anyone. In the kitchen an electric can opener, ergonomic jar opener, spring-loaded scissors and rubberized-grip utensils make cooking more pleasant. A bagel-cutter prevents serious injuries that stem from the bad habit of cutting bagels in the hand. You'll make your handyperson smile by giving a cordless screwdriver/drill and easy-grip pliers, hammers and other tools. To keep things easy to find and reach in the home, garage, closet or office, try organizers, hooks and hangers. Look for these items at stores that carry kitchen/bath and hardware/home products.

Want to go homemade? Try these new twists for old (or new) socks:



1. Make a warm "sock-buddy" by half-filling a large cotton tube sock with two to three cups of dry, uncooked white rice and a spoonful of dried lavender (optional). Tie the sock securely shut. Heat it in the microwave for 60 to 90 seconds. Make sure it's not too hot, and then place it on the neck, back or feet to soothe stiff, aching joints and muscles. Be extremely careful not to burn the skin by overheating the sock-buddy. And use it only in healthy, intact skin areas that are free of inflammation.
2. To make a back massager, place two tennis balls in a colorful sock and tie it closed. This can be used for a lovely self-massage by placing it with one ball on each side of the spine and rolling up and down gently against a wall. Be careful not to lose your footing.

For senior citizens, arthritic and otherwise physically-challenged individuals, consider additional items that help make everyday activities easier. Check out the Functional Solutions catalog from Morgan Hill-based North Coast Medical (408-776-5000; <http://www.ncmedical.com>), or Sammons-Preston's Aids to Daily Living ([http://pattersonmedical.com/app.aspx?cmd=get\\_sections&id=100000](http://pattersonmedical.com/app.aspx?cmd=get_sections&id=100000)). You'll find many of the items I've mentioned plus other, more medically related products like easy-grip eating utensils, bathing equipment and wheelchair accessories.

Whether you're at the checking-it-twice stage or just beginning to ponder your holiday gifts, I can't think of a better way to show you care than to give something that helps your special someone stay comfortable, safe and happy: an ergonomic gift.



Nancy M. Lowe is a Certified Ergonomist, Registered Physical Therapist and Certified Hand Therapist with over 20 years of experience treating and preventing injuries. For more ergonomics information visit <http://www.pacificcoastergo.com>

Copyright 2010 Nancy Lowe / Pacific Coast Ergonomics