

Casa Leisure OHS Bulletin

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Manual Handling

Manual handling is any activity involving the use of muscular force (or effort) to lift, move, push, pull, carry, hold or restrain any object including a person or animal. Manual handling also includes the following:

- repetitive actions, with or without force;
- sustained and/or strained work postures;
- exposure to whole body or hand-arm vibration.

Manual handling is the most severe and frequent of all workplace accidents that occur.

Injuries can be the result of gradual wear and tear (e.g. from frequent or prolonged activities), or sudden damage (e.g. from a single lift of something very heavy or awkward, or from tripping and falling while carrying an object). Jobs involving physical stress or repetitive movements have the highest rates of manual task injuries – which include nurses and health care workers, cleaners, packers and store persons.

Manual handling injuries are not limited to those sustained by lifting or carrying heavy loads. A person can be injured when handling objects in a variety of ways including pulling, pushing, holding or restraining.

Manual Handling injuries can include a slipped disc, nerve or soft tissue damage, torn muscles, arthritis from wear and tear and headaches.

Another type of Manual Handling injury includes repetitive computer and mouse work known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). These are minor strains that occur gradually over time and may not involve

immediate pain which can lead to the incorrect perception that these activities don't involve any risk.

Can you do any of the following to reduce the risk?

- Change the task - does this task need to be carried out? If so, does it have to be done this way?
- Change the object – for example, repack a heavy load into smaller parcels.
- Change the workspace – for example, use ergonomic furniture and make sure work benches are at optimum heights to limit bending or stretching.
- Use mechanical aids – like wheelbarrows, conveyor belts, cranes or forklifts.
- Change the nature of the work – for example, offer frequent breaks or the chance to do different tasks.
- Offer proper training – inexperienced workers are more likely to be injured.
- Storage - store lighter items higher on shelves, heavier items between mid-thigh and chest level

Principles of Safe Lifting

- Assess and plan for the task – consider weight, size & frequency
- Prepare the area e.g. remove obstacles
- Position your feet and face in intended direction of travel
- Take a secure grip of the object
- Stand with feet about shoulder width apart for balance
- Avoid stooping postures, maintain normal curve of the lower back, keep back in an upright position as much as possible and head up
- Bend the hips and knees

- Keep the load close to the body – elbows close to sides
- Breathe in and brace the core stabilisers to support the spine



It can happen so easily

A 48 year old female was helping a colleague to lift a heavy insulated box containing school lunches when she felt a sudden pain in her back. She has been unable to work for over 3 years due to the injury which brought on a degenerative condition in her spine.

She suffered a slipped disc and a trapped nerve which has left her in constant pain. She now has a limp and must use crutches.

They were lifting the heavy container from the ground in the school's kitchen to a trolley waiting at the kitchen's backdoor. They were responsible for bringing the school dinners to the infant school from the junior school, which was in a separate building across the road.

They wheeled the dinners across in a trolley, but because there were steps at the kitchen's door they had to carry the dinners from the kitchen to the trolley. On this occasion they had been left in the insulated box on the floor. They took a side each but as she stood up she felt her back pop.



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