

Manual Handling – Injury Prevention

Fact: This information paper is to provide minimum guidelines on manual handling within the workplace to ensure your safety.



Key Definitions:

Manual Handling

Manual handling means any activity requiring a force for a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any object.

Assess the Risk

In preventing any injury you must identify the factor likely to cause injury, the likelihood of injury occurring and the severity of damage then develop ways of controlling the risk. Back pain and injuries related to manual handling are some of the most frequent types of injuries, both on and off the job.

A fall, impact, or extreme load may cause a back injury. Sudden unexpected force can also cause injury. More commonly damage is caused over time by the cumulative effect of wear and tear and by consistently doing things the wrong way.

What causes back pain?

- Muscles and Ligaments - Sprains and strains.
- Discs - Ruptured or bulging discs.
- Joints – Osteoarthritis or joint damage.
- Degenerative changes in the spine.
- Pinched nerve.



What are the most common causes of injury?

- Body Position – awkward postures.
- Manual Handling – using excessive force or twisting.
- Repetitive movements.
- Over-exertion.
- Vibration.

Awkward Posture

Bending, sitting, twisting and reaching up overhead place the spine in an abnormal position – muscles and ligaments stretch. Blood circulation decreases. Structures of your back are put under pressure. Remaining in an

awkward posture for a long time and lifting in an awkward position puts your back at risk of injury.

Repetitive Work

Continual repetitive use of any part of the body can cause fatigue and pain. Repetitive twisting, bending, or lifting can reduce the back's ability to cope with a load and make it more susceptible to injury.

Over-exertion

Asking more of your back than it is capable of doing can cause injury. Remember that what your back is able to manage will be different if it is fatigued or damaged than when it is in its most healthy state. Everyone's manual handling capacity is different and depends on their individual ability to handle a load.

Vibration

Exposure to vibration can cause reduced circulation and make muscles fatigue more easily and so can make your back more susceptible to injury.

What happens most often is that a combination of these factors works together to cause the injury.

How can I prevent injuries? Personal Factors

Training

- Ask your supervisor for training in manual handling, correct lifting techniques, team lifting and risk assessment; and
- Try to ensure your workmates also have this training.

Always assess the risk

- Use your head before using your back;
- Know your own capabilities & limitations; and
- Remember to use risk assessments at home as well as at work.

Personal fitness is important

- Poor posture, lack of exercise and overeating can be your back's worst enemies and make it more vulnerable to injury. Don't rely on the work you do to make you fit enough to avoid injury.
- Regular exercise will help;
 - Improve your muscle strength; (especially, abdominal and leg muscles);
 - Improve your general fitness;
 - Control your weight;
 - Stay flexible;
 - Reduce fatigue; and
 - Protect your back.

Spend time relaxing

Tension and emotional problems of everyday life play an important role in back pain. Pressure and fatigue can actually lead to injury.

How can I prevent injuries? Workplace Factors

Identify the risk

Look critically at your actions and movements:

- What are my capabilities and limitations?
- Do I have to twist?
- Is it a confined position I have to lift in?
- Can I lift with a straight back?
- Do I spend a lot of time bent over?
- Do I work in awkward positions for long times?
- Do I do a lot of repetitive actions in my job?
- Do I lift heavy loads immediately after sitting for a long time?

Assess the risk

Risk of injury increases with:

- Length of time spent in awkward positions or doing repetitive work,
- Frequency of doing this type of work,
- Force required to handle a load,
- The individual's capability being affected by fatigue, previous injury, poor fitness, etc.

Control the risk

Redesign the job

- Modify objects, use smaller packs, lighter, or buy in bulk so you don't have to lift it.
- Modify layout of equipment to avoid bending or twisting.
- Rearrange flow of materials to avoid having to lift and carry loads.
- Do tasks in a different way. Avoid repetitive tasks, squat don't bend, use your legs to turn don't twist your back, use long handled tools.
- Manual handling equipment. Avoid lifting and carrying whenever possible by using cranes, hoists, trolleys, etc.

Legislation

Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld) s274

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (Qld) s60

Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2011