

# MANUAL HANDLING

## Facts:

Each year more than 85,000 workers are injured in Queensland costing Queensland billions of dollars in hidden costs. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has created a taskforce to halt the alarming rate of musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), which represent over **60 per cent of work-related injuries** in Queensland.



## Legislation:

**Queensland WH&S Act 1995, Part 3, WH&S Obligations, s27A**  
**Managing exposure to risks. Queensland WH&S Regulation 2008**  
**& Manual Tasks Code of Practice 2000.**

## General Safety Tips

- managers/supervisors should always conduct a risk assessment to identify and control any hazards associated with manual handling in the workplace. **(use Risk Matrix Tool below)**
- tools and equipment should be regularly inspected and maintained.
- all workers should be trained in the safe use of tools and equipment (as required), and manual handling.

		Consequence				
		Insignificant No Injury 0-\$5K	Minor First Aid \$5K-\$50K	Moderate Med Treatment \$50K-\$100K	Major Serious Injuries \$100K-\$250K	Catastrophic Death More than \$250K
2. Enter Probability	Almost Certain	M	H	E	E	E
	Likely	M	H	H	E	E
	Possible	L	M	H	H	H
	Unlikely	L	L	M	M	M
	Rare	L	L	L	L	L
<b>Recommended Action Guide</b>						
E=Extreme Risk – Task <b>MUST NOT</b> proceed						
H=High Risk – Special Procedures Required (See USQSafe)						
M=Moderate Risk – Work Method Statement Required						
L=Low Risk – Use Routine Procedures						



## What are manual tasks?

Manual tasks are carried out in most types of work. It includes activities that require someone to exert force in order to grasp, manipulate, strike, throw, carry, move (lift, lower, push, pull), hold or restrain an object, load or body part.

Manual tasks cover a wide range of activities such as stacking shelves, working on a processing line and entering data into a computer.

Manual tasks can contribute to injuries affecting all parts of the body, particularly the back, shoulder and wrist. These are commonly called musculoskeletal disorders and account for more than half of the:

- cost of workers' compensation claims
- number of days lost from work
- absences over six months.

Employers are responsible for preventing work related injuries or disorders caused by manual tasks.

## How do manual tasks cause injury?

An injury can be caused by a one-off overload situation, intense or strenuous activity or, more commonly, by ongoing wear and tear to the soft tissue structures of the body (joints, ligaments, muscles and intervertebral discs).

Over time, damage can build up through things such as:

- handling loads - frequent lifting with the back bent and/or twisted, or pushing or pulling loads
- repetitive work - using the hand or arm, or gripping tools or loads tightly
- static work of the whole body - working in a fixed position with the back bent, continuous sitting or standing, or driving vehicles for long periods
- static work of the upper limb - working with the neck, shoulders and arms in a fixed position (such as using tools and handling heavy loads)
- vibration – using tools or coming into contact with vibrating surfaces while undertaking manual tasks (such as sitting on a large machine).

## Manual task injuries – common disorders

- Tendons – attach the muscle to the bone. Can become inflamed and damaged when poor body mechanics are used. Typical injuries include the wrist and elbow.
- Muscles – mobilise and stabilise the joints. Can become tense, tired and sore and may also be sprained (over stretching) and strained (fibres tear as a result of over stretching).
- Ligaments – join bone to bone. Discomfort, sprains and strains
- Nerves – conduct signals to our brain. Typical injuries include the wrist, back and shoulder. Can be stretched by a high force or compressed or kinked from an awkward working posture.
- Discs in spine – wear and tear leading to rupture.

## How to look after yourself

- Minimise manual handling where possible
- Use sound body mechanics during manual tasks
- Keep 'work fit'
- Keep your back in the neutral zone
- Prepare for the lift – brace abdominal muscles
- Keep load close to your body
- Keep load in front – Don't twist
- Use leg muscles
- Don't overexert yourself
- Use smooth steady movements
- Use mechanical aids if able
- Gain assistance if required



