

# Hazardous Manual Tasks

minimising the risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders



Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most frequent type of lost-time injury and the single largest source of lost-time costs in Australia.



## Common causes



### Material handling

Discomfort, pain or injury due to repeated lifting, pushing and pulling.



### Workstation

Poor furniture, layout or job design.



### Repetitive motion injuries

Risk factors due to job design, awkward body motions, and tools.



### Inadequate job design

Pace of work, production pressure, lack of sufficient time to recover from overwork.



### Sedentary tasks

Discomfort, pain or injury due to sustained posture and motion economy.



### Mental or emotional stress

Psychosocial risk factors creating tension that reduces effective circulation.

## What employers can do

Eliminate hazards at the source through job design changes:



**Automation**  
automate tasks



**Job or task rotation**  
move between different tasks



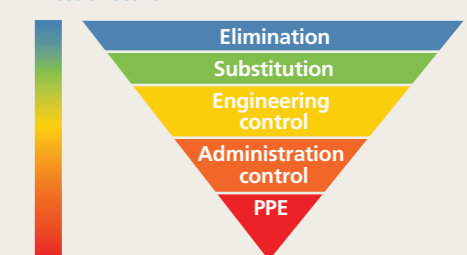
**Team work**  
distribute work evenly among team members



**Dynamic movement**  
increase dynamic movement, minimise sustained postures

### Hierarchy of controls

Most effective



Least effective

If elimination of repetitive patterns of work is not possible, prevention strategies can focus on:



**Workplace design**  
fitting the workstation to the worker



**Assistive devices**  
using carts, hoists, or other mechanical handling devices



**Work practices**  
training workers, allowing rest periods, and giving workers more job control, controlling psychosocial stressors



**Tool and equipment design**  
providing proper tools that decrease force, avoid awkward postures, and encourage dynamic movement

## Symptoms



Pain, joint stiffness, muscle tightness, redness, swelling of the affected area, numbness, "pins and needles" sensations, skin colour changes

Being aware of the causes and developing a prevention program is essential at the design or purchasing stage. Inform and train workers, encourage early reporting of symptoms, and identify and control risk factors.



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