

Manual Handling

Manual handling injuries are amongst the most common injuries. ACC receives over 50,000 work-related claims for lifting, carrying and strain injuries each year. This safety talk will provide some tips to help avoid these unnecessary injuries.

What is a Manual Handling Injury?

Manual handling injuries can be caused immediately (acute such as broken bones, cuts, sprains) or slowly over time by harming your musculoskeletal system (bones and muscles) and the injury gets worse over time (chronic injury).

Manual handling techniques include the lift, push, pull motions or carrying of objects. Workers can often assume awkward positions and unbalanced postures, which can lead to soft tissue damage.



Common injuries with manual handling is strained or sprained muscle tissue and / or elbow joint, lower back pain. These types of injury mainly occur due to poor technique or handling of items that are too heavy for the worker.



Take Another Look

Manual handling is a common everyday activity at a workplace, and is often overlooked when assessing risks. When assessing risks stop and think through any manual handling tasks that include lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving motions.

Talk to your employees to help gain valuable insights. Ask what, how and when manual handling activities are occurring onsite. Your employees may have ideas to reduce the need for manual handling.

Things to consider and discuss with the team:

- How often is handling done?
- How long does the handling last?
- How far does the load have to be moved?
- What is the size/shape and weight of the load?
- How many people do the job?
- What is the most likely injury from this job?
- What is the likelihood of a serious injury?

Past incident records can be a great source of information about manual handling injuries. These records can provide you information of tasks that have caused manual handling injuries in the past. By reviewing past incident records you can think about controls to implement to avoid further manual handling injuries from occurring.

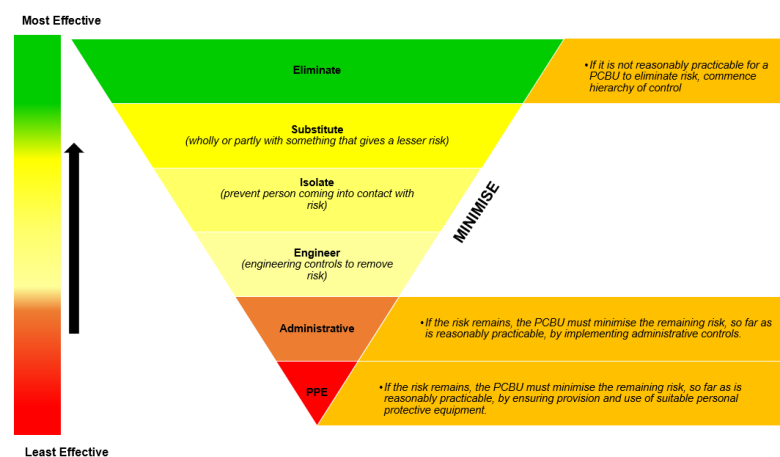
Specific Hazards

Specific hazards associated with manual handling include:

- Loads: Heavy, bulky, unstable, sharp or difficult to grasp loads can cause injuries.
- Force: Is there enough power to do the task?
- Repetition: Repetitive actions can tire muscles, hurt soft tissue and cause repetitive stress injuries.
- Bad Posture: How we hold our bodies can impact blood flow and muscle use.
- Surface / Floor: Objects in the way create trip hazards.

Controls

When looking at controls to implement think about the Hierarchy of Controls.



Some controls that you could implement to reduce the risk include:

- Use mechanical lifting devices
- Modify equipment to include wheels
- Provide adequate lighting for activity
- Provide trolleys, wheel sets or skates to handle large or awkward loads
- Store loads at waist height to reduce bending, stretching and twisting of the body to reach loads
- Keep area clean and clear of clutter, especially in pathways
- Organise delivery and storage of materials close to the work area to reduce the distance loads are carried
- Ask for help to assist with carrying or move a load in stages
- Take breaks
- Work activity suitable for workers physical ability
- Warm up prior to activity
- Wear suitable clothing and PPE such as gloves, safety boots, no loose clothing



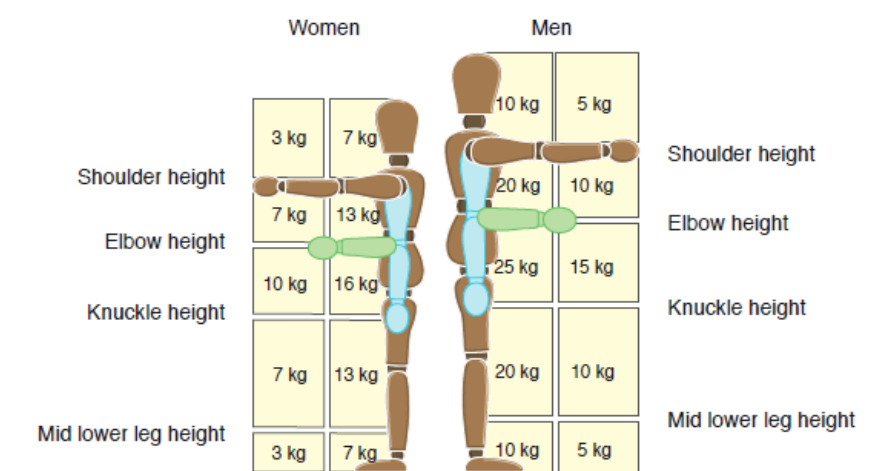
Manual Handling Tips



- Stand close to the load, feet hip-width apart with one foot slightly forward pointing in the direction going forward
- Knees should be bent while maintaining good posture

- Get a secure grip on the load and use handles if provided
- Breathe in before commencing the lift
- Carry out the lift smoothly using the legs to take the strain, keep the back straight, chin up and arms close to the body
- Step off in the direction the advanced foot is pointing
- Stop for rests if necessary
- Avoid jerky or twisting movements to avoid back / body strain
- Ask for help if needed. Do not lift a heavy load if you are not comfortable with it, complete a 2 person lift if necessary

Lifting and lowering



Recommended weight limits for lifting and lowering.