

Adopt good work practices

- ◆ Ensure workers are trained in the correct techniques and the use of equipment required for manual handling tasks.
- ◆ Ensure workers are able to vary the postures used at work by having the opportunity to take rest breaks and spend time doing jobs with different physical demands, postures and movements.
- ◆ Use job rotation to ensure that workers are not constantly stressing the same muscles and joints.
- ◆ Ensure that equipment is regularly maintained to be safe and serviceable. Poorly maintained equipment may cause a worker to use greater than necessary force, combined with stressful postures e.g. pushing a trolley with seized wheels.
- ◆ Consult workers when planning changes in work station design, layout, equipment and work practices to avoid introducing new risks.

Where can I find more help?

WORKPLACE SERVICES

Call us on
1300 365 255

Adelaide Office
Level 3, 1 Richmond Road
KESWICK SA 5035

Visit our website
[www. **Eric** .sa.gov.au](http://www.Eric.sa.gov.au)

Statewide Emergency
Serious accidents and incidents report number
1800 777 209 (24 hour service)

MAJOR WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Manual Handling

STRESSFUL POSTURES



WORKPLACE SERVICES
Department for Administrative
and Information Services


**Government
of South Australia**

What is 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.

It covers **more than lifting** heavy weights and affects more than the back. Manual handling also includes the repetitive activity seen in assembly work; the sustained muscle exertion required to restrain or support a load; and the effort needed to maintain the fixed postures that occur in the back and neck, while typing.

Manual handling and stressful postures

Stressful or awkward postures lead to workers using greater muscular effort to do the task. Stressful postures occur when joints perform work outside a straight and natural position. Examples include arms raised in front or to the sides, back, neck or wrists twisted, or head bent back e.g. when doing overhead work such as plastering and painting.

Stressful postures are not always harmful. They create a risk of injury when they are repeated frequently or held for long periods e.g. in assembly or packaging work or when laying bricks with a bent back. Working with awkward postures increases fatigue and discomfort. Muscles fatigue more quickly when held in a

fixed position because blood flow is restricted when the muscle is tensed but not moving. This causes great discomfort and the worker is likely to be less productive and more prone to errors.

Stressful postures nearly always occur when workers have to adapt to a work-station which does not suit their size. Therefore, the most effective way to deal with stressful postures is to redesign the work-station, tools and equipment used in the task.

To manage the manual handling risk arising from stressful postures you need to identify and assess each task, then put into place solutions to ensure the task is safe and efficient. Changes to work place design and the task itself are the most effective solutions.

Reducing the risks from stressful postures

Redesign the work station & equipment

- ◆ Position tools and other work materials in front of the worker to reduce bending sideways and twisting.
- ◆ Use adjustable working heights to suit the worker and the nature of the task e.g. a scissor lift or pallet stacker helps raise the load off the ground and reduces bending.
- ◆ Provide adequate knee and foot clearance so that workers can come close to the load.
- ◆ Provide enough room to move the feet when placing a load in a new position.

- ◆ Use swivel chairs and rotating turn tables rather than twisting the body.
- ◆ Use an inclined work surface to reduce bending of the neck during reading, inspection or fine work.
- ◆ Use a jig or frame to reposition and support the workpiece so the worker can move around it using both hands to do the task e.g. use a vice, plaster or duct lifter, or patient hoist.
- ◆ Modify equipment or provide a platform to position the worker at the right height to avoid lifting the arms e.g. when cleaning windows, meat boning or painting.
- ◆ Use arm supports for precision work or when working with tools during prolonged reaching e.g. when soldering, jewellery making or working on an electronics assembly.
- ◆ Allow the worker the opportunity to sit or stand to vary the working position. Precision work should be done seated. Work requiring the use of force is more efficient in a standing position.