

# Manual Tasks

Workplace injuries most commonly linked to manual tasks include sprains and strains, hernias and damage to the back. Such injuries are a major cause of lost time at work. 'Manual handling tasks' is more than just keeping your back straight and knees bent, or lifting properly – it involves safely carrying, pushing and pulling, and holding or restraining. Just as manual tasks involve more than just lifting, the things that affect the risk of injury involve more than just the weight of the objects handled. Factors such as repetitive and/or forceful movements, awkward movements or postures are also very important.

Injuries can be the result of gradual wear and tear, for example, from frequent or prolonged activities, or sudden damage, for example, from a single lift or something very heavy or awkward to handle or from tripping and falling while carrying an object.

Strain injuries may occur when:

- The load is lifted from the floor, or from below mid-thigh height.
- Reaching above shoulder height to either access items or work for any length of time in this position.
- There is too much twisting and bending.
- Excessive forward reaching is required.
- Items such as machine parts are too heavy when other risk factors, such as:
  - o The number of times things are moved or the distance moved, are taken into account.
  - o The items being moved are awkward to grasp due to their size and shape.

## How do I reduce the risk of injury from manual tasks?

<b>First step</b>	The first step, in consultation with your workers, is to identify the manual task hazards in your workplace. Manual task hazards can be identified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewing hazard/injury reports.</li><li>• Consulting with workers and safety and health representatives.</li><li>• By observing tasks being performed.</li></ul>
<b>Second step</b>	Next, in consultation with staff, identify trends and determine which tasks are higher risk/priority. For each task, complete a risk assessment to identify which risk factors are present for that task. Risk factors may be actions & postures; forces & loads; vibration; work environment; systems of work; and worker characteristics – please refer to the <i>WA Code of Practice Manual Tasks</i> for more information at <a href="https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/code-practice-manual-tasks">https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/code-practice-manual-tasks</a> .
<b>Final step</b>	Finally, for each hazard, determine what controls are needed to minimise risk. These controls may include, training and supervision and provision of a range of equipment such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trolleys.</li><li>• Castors and wheels.</li><li>• Forklifts.</li><li>• Hand trucks.</li><li>• Lift tables.</li><li>• Work stands.</li><li>• Pallet lifters.</li></ul>

## What is a safe weight to lift?

There is no safe weight. The risk of injury increases as the weight of the load increases. Evaluating the risk posed by the weight of the object needs to take into account:

- How long the load is handled.
- How often the load is handled.
- The physical characteristics of the individual.