



## Safety Alert

94 - Manual Handling

## Date

5 July 2021

## Did you know?

Manual handling related injuries make up 1 in 3 reported injuries in Australia.

## What injuries are related to manual handling?

- **Sprains and strains**
  - Sprain and strain injuries due to manual handling are the most common injuries suffered by workers across all workplaces.
- **Back injuries**
  - Common back injuries include injuries to the spine and slipped discs.
- **Soft-tissue injuries** to wrists, arms, shoulders, neck or legs
  - Muscle injury - acute muscular strains often occur when a worker is lifting/pushing/pulling a heavy load in an awkward position, such as away from the body or above shoulder height.
  - Tendon injury - most tendon injuries occur near joints, such as the shoulder, elbow, knee and ankle. A tendon injury may seem to happen suddenly, but usually it is the result of many tiny tears to the tendon that have happened over time.



- Nerve injury - a pinched nerve occurs when too much pressure is applied to a nerve by surrounding tissues, such as bones, cartilage, muscles or tendons. This pressure disrupts the nerve's function, causing pain, tingling, numbness and/or weakness. One of the risk factors here is overuse.
- **Hernias**
  - Hernias arise due to the constant pressure that is put on the muscles in the body. It is not only a particularly heavy lift that can cause a hernia at work, prolonged lifting of lighter objects can also be a contributing factor.
- **Chronic pain**
  - Caused by cumulative disorders due to the gradual and cumulative deterioration of the musculoskeletal system through continuous lifting / handling activities.

## What can I do to prevent manual handling injuries?

- **Warm up** – start your day with and regularly pause for warm-up/stretching exercises.
  - Pre-shift and regular warm-up exercises reduce the risk of musculoskeletal Injuries by reducing fatigue, improving muscular balance and posture, and improving muscle coordination.
- **Follow correct manual handling techniques**
  - Be certain each load is within your lifting capacity and will not obstruct your line of vision.
  - Check that your route and lay down area are free of hazards and are adequately lit.
  - Obtain a good footing and maintain a straight back posture.
  - Bend at the knees.
  - Grip the object firmly, using the palms of your hands and the roots of your fingers.



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- Lift gradually by straightening the legs.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Wear gloves when handling hot materials or objects with sharp or ragged edges.
- When an object requires two or more employees to handle, one employee should give the signals for lifting and lowering the object in unison.
- If you can't move the object safely and you are unable to break it down into smaller compartments, you will need to get mechanical assistance.

## Feedback

For further information regarding this Safety Alert, please contact EGT on (08) 6241 6100 or speak with your Field Officer.