



Manual Task Awareness



Preventing injury in the workplace has always focused on lifting techniques. This is important; however, there are other potential hazards in the way we perform our work each day which can also lead to injury. Manual handling is a term we have all heard before, but now we focus on a range of manual tasks. This means not just concentrating on heavy lifting, but the range of postures and movements we perform whilst at work.

What is a manual task?

A manual task is any activity requiring a person to use their musculoskeletal system in performing work. This includes movements like bending, twisting, reaching, lifting, awkward postures and sustained postures.

Hazardous characteristics of manual tasks

Here are some hazardous characteristics of manual tasks that you may be exposed to in your day.

- ▶ **Repetitive or sustained application of force** – Examples include gripping and moving any object
- ▶ **Repetitive or sustained awkward posture** – Examples include bending, twisting, reaching, sitting
- ▶ **Repetitive or sustained movement**
 - Repetitive = more than 2 times per minute
 - Sustained = greater than 30 seconds in duration
- ▶ **Application of high force** – This refers to use of excessive force, i.e. – working close to your physical limit
- ▶ **Exposure to sustained vibration** – This refers to a sustained period of exposure to either hand-arm or whole-body vibration
- ▶ **Handling of live people or animals** – This refers to lifting living things such as animals and children
- ▶ **Handling loads that are unstable, unbalanced or difficult to grasp** – This refers to any load that is difficult to hold, or any moving object

Can you think of any potential hazardous manual tasks from your work?

What changes can you make?

Some injury prevention techniques that can be applied into your day could be postural changes during the day (recommended every 30-60 mins), warm up and stretch before and after any high-risk tasks, thinking before you act and most importantly, understanding your own physical capacity.

Remember – it is not just heavy lifting that can lead to injury. Here is a reminder of safe lifting techniques.

1. Plan the lift and assess the load
2. Stable base of support
3. Back straight in comfortable upright position
4. Shift your hips back
5. Slowly squat as if sitting back into a chair
6. Push weight through your heels

