

Manual Handling

Background

Defined in Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992: “any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or by bodily force.”



Picture: ghskills.com

What is the risk?

Poor handling can lead to musculoskeletal disorders such as back pain and can be traumatic, cumulative and degenerative.

Health and Safety Statistics 2013/14  www.hse.gov.uk

KEY FACTS	WORK-RELATED ILL HEALTH	WORKPLACE INJURY	ENFORCEMENT	OTHER TOPICS	SOURCES AND DEFINITIONS
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Reports of ill health by doctors and specialist physicians

Since 2005, a surveillance scheme has collected reports of new cases of work-related ill health from a sample of around 250 general practitioners (GPs). In 2013:

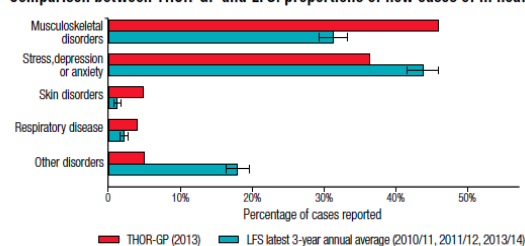
- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) were the most common type of work-related illness.
- Mental ill health gave rise to most working days lost.
- The distribution of cases was broadly similar to the LFS but with a higher proportion of MSDs, which could partly reflect the inclusion of some injuries reported by GPs and the different perceptions of work-attribution between GPs and individual workers.

Other surveillance schemes collect reports from specialist physicians on specific types of work-related ill health:

Skin specialists (EPIDERM)

- In 2013, there were an estimated 1268 new cases of skin disease reported by dermatologists, of which three quarters were suffering from contact dermatitis.
- Annual cases have fallen over the past 10 years.
- Hairdressers/barbers and florists are the occupations with the highest rates of contact dermatitis.

Comparison between THOR-GP and LFS: proportions of new cases of ill health

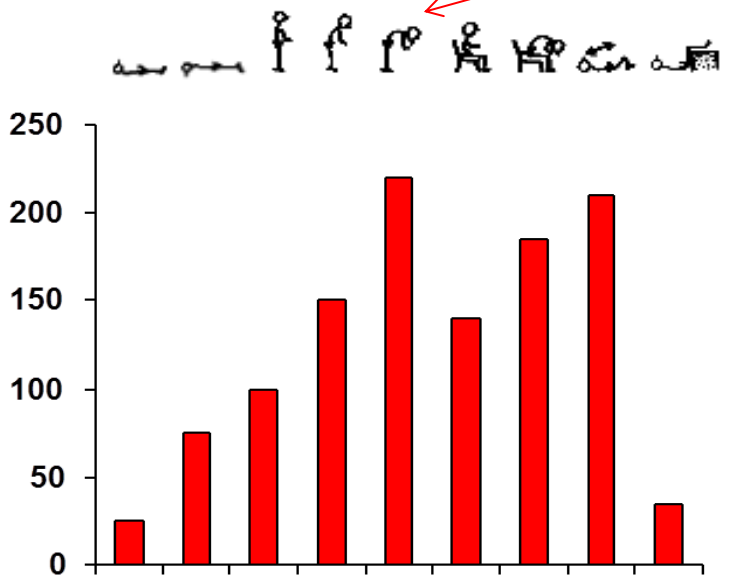


Respiratory specialists (SWORD)

- In 2013, there were 177 new cases of asthma reported to chest physicians.
- Annual cases have remained broadly constant over the past five years, having fallen in the previous five years.
- Vehicle spray painters and bakers are the occupations with the highest rates of asthma.



Pressures on the 3rd Lumbar Disc – body positions



Safe Handling Technique



Picture: alert4training.ie

Procedures for employees and volunteers to follow:

- Remove obstructions from the route.
- For a long lift, plan to rest the load midway on a table or bench to change grip.
- Keep the load close to the waist. The load should be kept close to the body for as long as possible while lifting.
- Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body.
- Adopt a stable position and make sure your feet are apart, with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance

Think before lifting/handling.

Plan the lift. Can handling aids be used? Where is the load going to be placed? Will help be needed with the load? Remove obstructions such as discarded wrapping materials. For a long lift, consider resting the load midway on a table or bench to change grip.

Adopt a stable position.

The feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground). Be prepared to move your feet during the lift to maintain your stability. Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, which may make this difficult.

Get a good hold.

Where possible, the load should be hugged as close as possible to the body. This may be better than gripping it tightly with hands only.

Start in a good posture.

At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).

Don't flex the back any further while lifting.

This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.

Keep the load close to the waist.

Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible while lifting. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it.

Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways, especially while the back is bent.

Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips. Turning by moving the feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.

Keep the head up when handling.

Look ahead, not down at the load, once it has been held securely.

Move smoothly.

The load should not be jerked or snatched as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury.

Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed.

There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.

Put down, then adjust.

If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first, then slide it into the desired position.

Legislation

Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992

Each employer shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, avoid the need for his employees to undertake any manual handling operations at work which could involve a risk of their being injured.

- avoid manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable,
- assess the risk in any manual handling operations that cannot be avoided and
- reduce the risk of injury so far as reasonably practicable

Key Requirements

Some of the key requirements relating to manual handling are shown in the table below:

Key Requirement	Content of requirement
Manual handling policy	There should be a policy document covering the organisations approach to the management of the risk associated with manual handling. This should show the aims, objectives and organisational arrangements for effectively managing the risk associated with manual handling.
Manual handling risk assessment	Carry out risk assessments for “significant” manual handling activities and consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Load• Individual• Task• Environment
Training for employees and volunteers whose role involves manual handling	Training should cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• manual handling risk factors and how injuries can occur;• how to carry out safe manual handling including good handling technique• appropriate systems of work for the individual's tasks and environment;• use of mechanical aids;• practical work to allow the trainer to identify and put right anything the trainee is not doing safely.
Mechanical aids (such as trolleys) can be provided to reduce the risk associated with manual handling	Mechanical aids must be included in an inspection and maintenance regime to ensure that they remain in good and safe condition.

Unique Challenges

- In the care environment, patient handling needs to be risk assessed and managed and training in patient handling is more complex than load handling and specialist handling aids also require training on and management – e.g. hoists.
- Volunteers can and are reluctant to take part in health and safety training, especially if they are part time (and don't want to waste their time doing training).