

Musculoskeletal Disorders

What are MSDs?

MSDs are injuries that affect muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves. Injuries can develop when the same muscles are used repetitively, or for a long time without adequate rest. This type of injury increases if the force exerted is high and/or the job requires an awkward posture. Some examples of MSDs include back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis and tenosynovitis.

MSDs do not include musculoskeletal injuries or disorders that are the direct result of a traumatic event, such as a fall, being struck by or against an object, being caught in or on something, a vehicle collision, or workplace violence.



What the law says

Employers are required by law to take every reasonable precaution to protect workers from hazards, including those that may result in MSD injuries. The MSD prevention guideline, announced in February 2007, is clear about employers' obligations. Numerous sections under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and regulations relate to MSD prevention and ergonomics.

How MSDs can affect your business

MSDs account for 43% of all work-related injuries, 43% of all lost-time claim costs, and 46% of all lost-time days. (Source: MOL: Prevention Workplace Pains and Strains! It's time to take action!)

Between 2003 and 2007, MSD claims resulted in 2.5 million days off work. During this same period, Ontario employers paid more than \$1 billion in direct and indirect costs related to MSDs. Indirect costs include overtime, equipment modifications, administration, retraining and lost productivity.

Employers can improve their bottom line and employee morale by fitting the work environment to the worker. Less strenuous tasks make it easier to train workers. Healthy workers, free from discomfort, are more efficient.

What you can do

Handle MSD risk factors the way you would any other workplace hazard: identify where workers could sustain an MSD injury and eliminate or control it. Make MSD prevention a key element of your workplace health and safety program. Apply ergonomic principles early in the design phase of a new process or task to save money.

Steps you can take:

- Familiarize yourself with MSD hazards in your workplace
- Perform your own audit
- Establish controls to reduce worker exposure to MSD risk factors
- Have a well-documented MSD program visibly in place
- Implement MSD-specific strategies, tools and training
- Train workers about the MSD risk factors in their job and in the workplace
- Encourage workers to report MSD symptoms or concerns