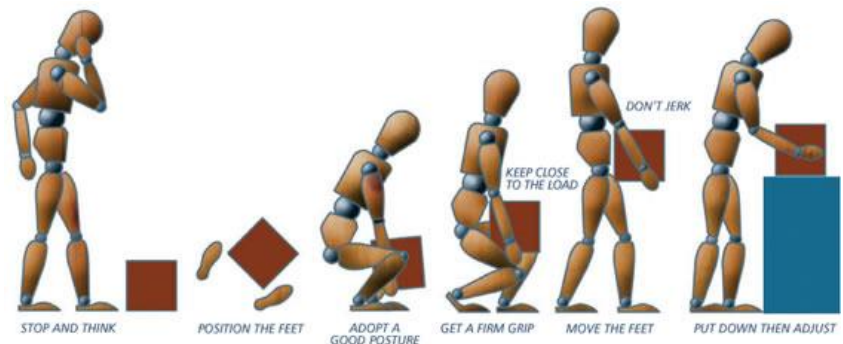


Manual Handling

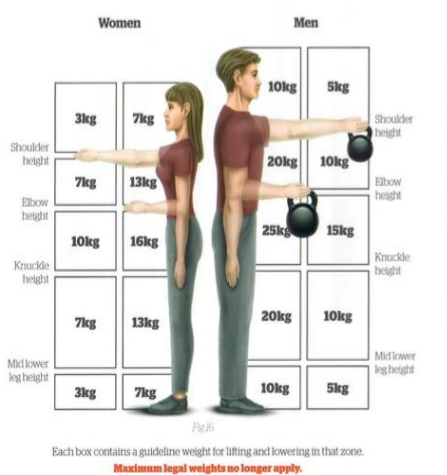
Manual handling is the construction industry's biggest cause of ill health. Every year an estimated 900,000 working days are lost due to handling injuries. Your back is strong but repeated twisting, straining and incorrect manual handling can affect the following parts of your body.

- ▶ Whole body
- ▶ Back
- ▶ Arms
- ▶ Hands
- ▶ Shoulders
- ▶ Feet and ankles



Back injuries are most common but hernias, ruptures, sprains and strains are all conditions that can result from manual handling.

Poor posture (such as slouching on the settee, sleeping on a poor supporting mattress, and sitting in a driving position that twists or doesn't support your spine) can all add to the problem. Your employer has a legal duty to avoid any manual handling activity that will harm you.



Manual handling relates to the moving of items either by lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing or pulling. The weight of the item is an important factor, but many other factors can create a risk of injury, for example the number of times you have to pick up or carry an item, the distance you are carrying it, where you are picking it up from or putting it down (picking it up from the floor, putting it on a shelf above shoulder level) and any twisting, bending, stretching or other awkward posture you may adopt while doing a task.

Manual handling injuries are part of a wider group of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The term 'musculoskeletal disorders' covers any injury, damage or disorder of the joints or other tissues in the upper/lower limbs or the back.

There is evidence that, as well as manual handling, heavy manual labour, awkward postures and a recent or existing injury are all risk factors in the development of MSDs. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (MHOR) require employers to manage the risks to their employees. They must:

- ▶ Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable, by redesigning the task to avoid moving the load or by automating or mechanising the process.
- ▶ Make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided.
- ▶ Reduce the risk of injury from those operations so far as is reasonably practicable. Where possible, provide mechanical assistance, for example, a sack trolley or hoist. Where this is not reasonably practicable then explore changes to the task, the load and the working environment.

Lifting an Object

1. Assess the Task, the Area and the Load. Decide on the action required (e.g. load to be lifted, pushed etc) and make sure you know the intended location. To assess the load push gently using your foot, or hands/arms (see figure 17 on the right). Use T.L.L.E assessment (see pages 24 - 27).



Fig 17
Assessing the Load

2. Establish a Broad Stable Base. Feet should be shoulder width apart (see figure 18 on the right).



Fig 18 Broad Stable Base

3. Bend slightly at the knees, back and hips.

This is a better posture to adopt than stooping (fully flexing the back) or squatting (fully flexing the hips and knees) (see fig. 19 on the right). You may also assess the weight of the load at this stage by tilting it.



Fig 19 Adopt a good posture

4. Maintain good posture.

Be careful not to flex your back as you start to stand upright and lift the load. Maintain natural S-curve of the spine (see figure 20a on the right).



Fig 20a Maintain good posture

5. Establish a Firm Grip

Grasp the load firmly using full palmar surface (see figure 20b on the right).



Fig 20b Establish & Maintain Firm Grip

6. Keep Arms Close to Your Trunk.

Ensure your arms are close to your trunk. Lift your head and rise avoiding sudden movements (see figure 21 on the right).

Fig 21
Keep Arms Close to Your Trunk



7. Keep the weight close to the centre of gravity.

Ensure the weight is close to your centre of gravity (see figure 22 on the right).



Fig 22
Arms Close to the Trunk

MHOR requires an employer to carry out a risk assessment on all manual handling tasks that pose an injury risk. The employer's duty is to avoid manual handling as far as reasonably practicable if there is a possibility of injury. If this cannot be done then they must take steps to reduce the risk of injury as far as reasonably practicable.

Employers Duties

- ▶ **Avoid** the need for hazardous manual handling, as far as reasonably practicable.
- ▶ **Assess** the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that can not be avoided
- ▶ **Reduce** the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, as far as reasonably practicable

Find out more on HSE website

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/backpain/employers/mhor.htm>

Check out our Manual Handling Toolbox Talk

[Manual Handling Toolbox Talk & Record Sheet](#)