



# TOOLBOX TALKS

## MANUAL HANDLING

Manual handling injuries are among the most common workplace injuries in New Zealand. They can occur suddenly, such as when lifting a heavy object, or they can develop over time, such as through repetitive lifting. Common manual handling injuries include:

**Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)** – These are injuries that affect the muscles, tendons, and ligaments and are the most common type of manual handling injury. MSDs can cause pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility in affected areas. **Slips, trips, and falls** – These injuries can occur when carrying heavy objects, especially if your vision is obstructed.

**Slips, trips, and falls** can cause sprains, strains, and fractures.

**Cuts, bruises, and abrasions** – These types of injuries can occur when you come into contact with sharp or rough surfaces during manual handling tasks.

To prevent injury, it is essential to consider the following factors when carrying out manual handling tasks:

- 1. The weight and size of the load**  
You should only lift loads within your physical capabilities. Loads that are too heavy or too bulky can cause injury.
- 2. The distance the load needs to be moved**  
You should plan your lifting and moving routes to avoid obstacles and reduce the distance the load needs to be moved.
- 3. The height the load needs to be lifted or lowered**  
Lifting loads above shoulder height or lowering them below knee height can cause injury.
- 4. The frequency and duration of the manual handling task**  
You should take regular breaks and avoid carrying out manual handling tasks for extended periods.
- 5. The environment in which the manual handling is being carried out**  
You should be aware of any hazards, such as uneven surfaces, slippery floors, or low lighting.

Good manual handling techniques can prevent injuries and promote safe working practices. Therefore, you should use the following methods when carrying out manual handling tasks:

### **ASSESS THE LOAD**

Before lifting a load, you should assess its weight and size and determine whether you can lift it safely. If the load is too heavy or bulky, you should seek assistance or use lifting aids.

### **PLAN THE LIFT**

You should plan a lift before carrying it out, taking into account the distance the load needs to be moved, the height it needs to be lifted or lowered, and any obstacles that need to be avoided.

### **ADOPT A STABLE POSITION**

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and one foot slightly in front of the other to maintain a stable position.

### **BEND THE KNEES**

Bend your knees when lifting a load which keeps your back straight and reduces the risk of injury.

### **KEEP THE LOAD CLOSE TO THE BODY**

Keep the load as close to your body as possible to reduce the strain on your back.

### **AVOID TWISTING**

Avoid twisting your back when lifting or moving a load, as this can cause injury.

### **USE LIFTING AIDS**

Use lifting aids, such as trolleys, hoists, or pallet trucks, to reduce the risk of injury.

### **TAKE REGULAR BREAKS**

Workers should take frequent breaks when carrying out manual handling tasks to avoid fatigue and reduce the risk of injury.

Good manual handling techniques are essential for preventing injuries and promoting safe working practices. You should always assess the load, plan the lift, adopt a stable position, bend the knees, keep the load close to the body, avoid twisting, use lifting aids, and take regular breaks. Following these techniques can reduce the risk of manual handling injuries and promote safe working practices.