

PROTECTING WORKERS'
HEALTH SERIES NO 5

Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace

Risk factor information and
preventive measures for
employers, supervisors and
occupational health trainers



**WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

Protecting Workers'
Health Series
No 5

Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace

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Preface

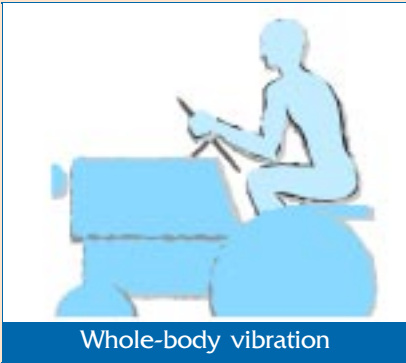
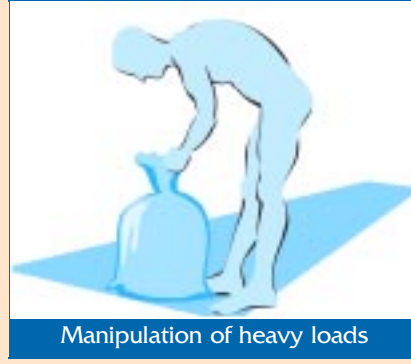
Disorders of the musculoskeletal system represent a main cause for absence from occupational work. Musculoskeletal disorders lead to considerable costs for the public health system. Specific disorders of the musculoskeletal system may relate to different body regions and occupational work. For example, disorders in the lower back are often correlated to lifting and carrying of loads or to the application of vibration. Upper-limb disorders (at fingers, hands, wrists, arms, elbows, shoulders, neck) may result from repetitive or long-lasting static force exertion or may be intensified by such activities. The severity of these disorders may vary between occasional aches or pain to exactly diagnosed specific diseases. Occurrence of pain may be interpreted as the result of a reversible acute overloading or may be a pre-symptom for the beginning of a serious disease.

The purpose of this document on the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders is to inform about risk factors and to influence the actions of employers and the behaviour of workers in such a way that risks of physical loadings, dangerous to health or unnecessary fatiguing, are avoided or diminished. The document has been prepared in such a way that it can be used by employers, supervisors, and occupational health trainers when designing work and work environment or for preparing information materials and training programs. In consequence, application of the guide should be helpful to reduce harm to individuals, to influence the efficiency of work positively, and to reduce costs on the public health system.

It is intended that this booklet be used by employers, supervisors and occupational health trainers to help them recognise risks that may lead to musculoskeletal disorders, as well as to design work itself and the work environment in a way which is safe for the employee.

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Examples of physical loadings at work which may be dangerous to health:



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