



## Common Causes of MSI Injuries at Work (Musculoskeletal Injuries)

### What are the workers' responsibilities?

Under the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, workers have the following responsibilities with regard to the [Ergonomics \(MSI\) Requirements](#).

- Know the MSI risk factors related to their work, as well as the signs and symptoms of MSI and their potential health effects.
- Participate in education and training on established safe work procedures, including the use of risk controls such as mechanical aids.
- Follow MSI prevention policies and safe work procedures.
- Cooperate with the employer, joint health and safety committee or worker health and safety representative, and WorkSafeBC prevention officers.
- Report signs and symptoms of MSI to their supervisor and first aid attendant (where required). They must also report to their supervisor any unsafe acts or conditions, such as the failure of mechanical lifting equipment or changes in the job that could compromise safety.

### 1) Awkward Postures

Awkward positions occur when you are required to bend, reach, or twist. This often happens when you have to reach for something that is too far away, or you use a piece of equipment that may cause the wrist or back to bend in an unnatural way. When our bodies are forced into awkward positions, the ligaments and muscles are strained and have to work harder.

#### Safe work practices:

- Avoid reaching. Wait until the conveyor or turntable brings items closer to you.
- To avoid stooping, adjust heights on carts, and try to store items off of the floor.
- Try to keep wrists as straight as possible when folding laundry, when slicing food in the kitchen or stocking shelves.
- When you turn, move your feet instead of twisting your back.
- Keep anything you lift close to your body.

### 2) Pinch Grip

In the retail store where you work, you may often use — but should avoid — a forceful pinch-grip to scan large items, or when pushing down on a dull knife, or when decorating cakes. For example, a cashier may often use a forceful grip to move relatively light weight items over the scanner, especially if the item is slippery, cold, or difficult to grasp. Poor wrist posture, cold temperatures, and wearing gloves may also contribute to the grip pressure you apply.

Laundry – when folding laundry, our habit is to pinch the sheets and towels between our fingers as we fold. We must get in the habit of using our full hand to grip the laundry.

#### Safe work practices:

- Where possible, push items rather than pull.
- Use the entire hand and not just the fingers to grip items.
- If possible, slide rather than lift items.

- When possible, change your lifting, pulling, and pushing techniques so that you use the larger muscles of your back, arms, and legs.
- Lift bags and other awkward or slippery items with two hands — one hand on top of the item and the other supporting the bottom.

### 3) Holding the same position

If you are a cutting vegetables, or folding laundry you may hold parts of your body in the same position for an extended period of time. When you hold postures for long periods of time, your muscles are in a constant state of contraction. The muscles may become tired, uncomfortable, and even painful.

#### **Safe work practices:**

- Alternate your posture, using different sides of your body.
- Take mini-rest breaks to relax muscles.
- Alternate between standing and sitting postures.
- Use anti-fatigue mats to stand on.
- Wear supportive, cushioned footwear.
- When possible, move your feet instead of leaning or reaching.

### 4) Reduce repetition

When you cut vegetables, wipe surfaces, fold laundry, wrap meat, or stock shelves, your job involves repetitive hand and wrist movements. The act of repeatedly reaching, bending, grasping, or lifting can increase your risk of injury over a period of time. Here are some tips that may help you reduce your exposure to repetitive movements.

#### **Safe work practices:**

- Pass products from one hand to the other to alternate the use of your hands
- Take mini-rest pauses to relax muscles
- Avoid repeatedly picking up items; try sliding them
- Alternate duties when possible