

## SIX WORKPLACE FIXES TO KEEP WORKERS' BACKS, SHOULDERS, NECKS AND HANDS HAPPY & HEALTHY

### POSTERS

- 1 STORE IT OFF THE FLOOR:** Store – and work on – objects between hip and chest height.
- 2 KEEP IT CLOSE:** Store objects or work close to the belly button.
- 3 HANDS BELOW HEAD:** Work with hands below the head.
- 4 LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD:** Work with the head straight and level.
- 5 GET A (GOOD) GRIP:** Objects, tools and gloves should fit hands, keep hands and wrists strong, and not vibrate.
- 6 CHANGE IT UP:** A well-organized job has variety and pauses that give the body time to recover.
- 7 WORK SHOULDN'T HURT:** Find jobs that may have MSD hazards.

Each poster describes a common workplace hazard that can lead to MSD. It also gives ideas on how to fix it. MSD hazards can be found in all sizes of workplaces and in all sectors.

### HOW TO USE THE POSTERS

- Use the posters as guides during workplace walkthroughs and inspections. On the back of the poster, write observations and ideas about possible fixes for hazards.
- Use the posters as a script to aid workers, supervisors and others during safety or toolbox talks. Use the discussion to brainstorm possible fixes.
- Use the posters in the lunchroom or on the Health & Safety board to alert workers to potential MSD hazards in their work and their relationship to pain and discomfort.
- Keep looking for improvements!

You may recognise some or all six hazards in your workplace. This tells you that your workplace would benefit from MSD prevention actions.

### WHAT DO THE COLOURS MEAN?

**GREEN** – No action required if tasks are not held or repeated for long periods and no MSD symptoms are reported. Continue to monitor for MSD symptoms and check after workplace or process changes.

**YELLOW** – Investigations and improvement needed in the longer term. Investigation and improvement needed immediately if MSD symptoms are present.

**ORANGE** – Further assessment or improvement needed immediately.



For more info visit:  
[msdprevention.com](https://msdprevention.com)

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Centre of Research  
Expertise for the  
Prevention of  
Musculoskeletal Disorders

Work  
shouldn't  
hurt

# Work shouldn't hurt

Quick start guide

Back and shoulder pain, tennis elbow and other Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) are a major cause of workplace pain, discomfort, disability and costs.

Help workers in pain now – and avoid it in the future – by improving your workplace. Eliminating MSD hazards is one part of creating a safe workplace.

Small changes can make a big difference! A workplace free of MSD hazards protects workers now, allows injured workers to return to their jobs more easily, and allows more people to perform those jobs: male or female; old or young; tall or short.

This folder contains workplace fixes to help keep workers' backs, shoulders, necks and hands happy & healthy!

Employers have a legal responsibility to provide a safe workplace under the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act. This includes improving the workplace and implementing measures to protect workers from all hazards, including those related to musculoskeletal disorders.



## MSD MYTHS

Lifting properly and using your legs prevents low back pain:

**NOT true!**

Dealing with MSD at work is too complicated and a lot of trouble:

**NOT true!**

MSD can't be prevented because they are due to *genetics* or *gardening*:

**NOT true!**

MSD fixes cost too much and are not practical:

**NOT true!**

## STORE IT OFF THE FLOOR

One small company took this simple message and applied it over several months to dozens of workstations and work areas. It greatly reduced the load on their workers' bodies.

Managers and workers were happy with the changes made.

## MAKING A START

Starting is the most important part of reducing back pain, shoulder tendinitis, tennis elbow and other Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD). This package will give you a good start.

Some of the ideas may seem very simple, but you can substantially reduce MSD hazards by applying these ideas throughout your workplace (and home).

The mini-posters give you the general idea behind the fix. For example, STORE IT OFF THE FLOOR shows how to store objects. It's the same rule for storing boxes in an office, moving parts in manufacturing, or setting up stands and work surfaces for heavy tasks in construction.

### ACTIONS

- Jump straight in. Start using these posters in your workplace inspections and toolbox talks and make changes to remove or reduce any hazards.
- Follow the steps on the facing page for a more systematic approach.

## WANT HELP?

There are many websites with straightforward fixes for MSD hazards and many groups and organizations that you can turn to for information and help.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour has partners in many sectors that can provide resources and can answer your questions:  
[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/websites.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/websites.php)

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has pages dedicated to the prevention of MSD:  
[www.ccohs.ca/topics/hazards/ergonomic](http://www.ccohs.ca/topics/hazards/ergonomic)

The Washington State Department of Labour in the US has collected a wide range of fixes for MSD hazards:  
[www.ini.wa.gov/safety/sprainsstrains/ideasbank/default.asp](http://www.ini.wa.gov/safety/sprainsstrains/ideasbank/default.asp)

This guide was written to help very small businesses make sure that workers can go home without pain. It is part of a larger resource: the MSD Prevention Guidelines ([www.msdpredvention.ca](http://www.msdpredvention.ca)). The website includes the information in this Quick Start Guide as well as resources to help prevent MSD and materials for larger organizations.

**Authorship:** This document has been written by the Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD) in collaboration with multiple workplace stakeholders. ([www.CRE-MSD.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.CRE-MSD.uwaterloo.ca))

**Disclaimers:** The information provided in this folder and mini-posters is based upon best current knowledge and is intended to help workplaces reduce MSD. The information and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of CRE-MSD, the Ministry of Labour or the Province of Ontario.

For questions, comments and suggestions please contact: [info@msdpredvention.ca](mailto:info@msdpredvention.ca)

## MSD PREVENTION IN 10 STEPS

### 1 MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT & LEADERSHIP

### 2 WORKERS' PARTICIPATION

### 3-4 FIND PROBLEMS

- Add MSD related hazards to walkthrough inspection.
- Use workers' reports of effort, pain and discomfort to help identify tasks with MSD hazards. Use previous injury reports.
- For a worker who has reported pain or MSD, perform an incident investigation of their work tasks.
- Get to the root or underlying cause of the MSD hazard.

### 5 PLAN TO FIX PROBLEMS

- Talk to workers to identify solutions to reduce or eliminate MSD hazards.
- Prioritize workplace changes over less effective worker-focused solutions: hoists or carts instead of lift training or job rotation.
- Before making a permanent change, test the fix, e.g., get a tool on trial from a distributor.
- Be prepared to try a few fixes to find the right one for your workplace.

### 6-7 FIX PROBLEMS

- Make the change, but expect adjustment period and possible effects on other processes.
- Give changes a fair trial by allowing workers to learn and become proficient with them before deciding on their effectiveness.

### 8 CHECK EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS

- Check whether the changes have removed the original hazards and improved the work.
- Determine if the changes have introduced new hazards.

### 9 DOCUMENT LESSONS LEARNED

- \* These steps are expanded upon in the Basic and Comprehensive Step-by-Step guidelines.

### 10 FOLLOW UP

- If the changes are not working, return to PLAN TO FIX PROBLEMS.
- Consider asking for outside help if either the problem or solution are unclear.

**SHOW YOUR COMMITMENT TO A SAFE WORKPLACE BY GETTING TOGETHER WITH WORKERS TO ELIMINATE MSD HAZARDS AND IMPROVE HEALTH**

FOLD HERE TO CREATE A FOLDER FOR MINI-POSTERS