

# Preventing work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)

MSDs are the most common cause of physical disabilities in our population. A significant number of these disabilities are work-related.

MSDs can cause pain, particularly in the joints, muscles and tendons. Workplace MSDs represented nearly one-third of CSST-compensated occupational injuries in 2013.

These injuries tend to persist longer on average than other occupational injuries.

According to Health Canada, musculoskeletal conditions are the second most costly health problem after cardiovascular disease.

Most of the costs associated with these injuries are indirect and related to lost productivity and disability.

## MSD prevention: responsibilities and obligations!

The purpose of the *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS)<sup>1</sup> is to eliminate hazards to worker health, safety and physical integrity at the source. It also aims to eliminate MSDs in the workplace. The *Regulation respecting occupational health and safety* (ROHS)<sup>2</sup> specifies certain requirements to be met.

### AOHS

#### Employer obligations

Every employer must take the necessary measures to protect the health and ensure the safety and physical well-being of the worker. He must, in particular,

- see that the establishments under his authority are equipped and arranged to ensure protection of the worker;
- ensure that the organization of the work and working procedures and techniques do not adversely affect the safety or health of the worker;

- use methods and techniques intended for the identification, control and elimination of risks to the safety or health of the worker;
- provide and maintain safety equipment in good condition;
- properly inform the worker regarding hazards related to his work and provide the appropriate training, assistance or supervision to ensure that the worker possesses the skills and knowledge required to safely perform the work assigned.

(Excerpts from AOHS, s. 51)

### Worker obligations

A worker must

- take the necessary measures to ensure his health, safety or physical well-being;

- see that he does not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other persons at or near his workplace;
- participate in identifying and eliminating the risks of work accidents or occupational diseases at his workplace;

(Excerpts from AOHS, s. 49)

### ROH

- **Handling:** Workers assigned to handling loads or persons must be trained in safe work practices.

When the manual movement of loads or persons compromises worker safety, mechanical devices must be made available. (ROHS, s. 166)

- **Working on piles:** Workers shall have the necessary equipment to safely reach the top of piles of material, such as step ladders, portable ladders, pinch grips or any other equipment designed for such purpose. (ROHS, s. 167)

- **Level of work:** Workbench heights and seating positions shall be adapted to the work and the worker in order to ensure correct posture and reduce fatigue. (ROHS, s. 168)
- **Position:** Tools, levers and materials must be positioned to facilitate work and reduce strain. (ROHS, s. 169)
- **Chairs and benches:** Chairs or benches must be available to workers when the nature of their work permits. (ROHS, s. 170)

<sup>1</sup> An Act respecting occupational health and safety, R.S.Q., c. S-2.1.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation respecting occupational health and safety, c. S-2.1, r. 19.01.  
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# Preventing MSDs: Let's do something about it!

## What are the benefits of MSD prevention?

The main benefit is protecting worker health, in addition to:

### Increased worker satisfaction by improving

- the working environment
- workers' interest
- more effective teamwork
- return to work for injured workers
- the company image

### Increase productivity by decreasing

- rejects
- errors
- production delays

### Reducing indirect costs associated with the occurrence of MSDs in workers

- time loss for first responders, supervisors and other workers when accidents occur
- costs not covered by the CSST (e.g.: uninsured salary)
- hiring, training replacements
- case management

Moreover, under certain circumstances, CSST billing could be reduced, particularly where the retrospective plan applies.

## Is there an MSD hazard in your workplace?

Do your statistics show many cases of back pain or MSDs?

(e.g.: tendinitis, bursitis, epicondylitis, etc.) ? ☐ **YES**

Are there workstations where people complain of musculoskeletal pain? ☐

In your opinion, are there any other workstations that may present risk situations (even where there are no injuries or complaints)? ☐

Are you aware of the presence of these hazardous factors in your environment? **YES**

- awkward postures ☐
- strain ☐
- repetition ☐
- static work ☐
- mechanical pressure ☐
- vibrations and mechanical shocks ☐
- cold ☐
- psychosocial and organizational factors ☐

Remember that the **la durée, duration, intensity** and **frequency** (DIF) of these factors can influence the risk of developing MSDs!

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you need to take action.

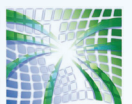
## What are the primary means of prevention?

Prevention measures must promote neutral postures and reduce strain. You may therefore:

- adjust the height of the work surface
- arrange workstations in accordance with comfort zones
- ensure that objects are picked up and deposited in the comfort zone, between shoulders and mid-thigh
- use proper handling techniques
- vary tasks and change posture
- choose the appropriate tool
- optimize lighting
- include MSD prevention in your training program
- implement an approach to MSD prevention

For more information, contact your occupational health team: [santeautravail.qc.ca](mailto:santeautravail.qc.ca)

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