



# OH&S TIPSHEET

Health and Safety in Early Childhood Services

## Manual handling

Manual handling is defined in the OHS Regulations 2007, Part 3.1 Manual Handling, as 'any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any object'.

### Manual Handling Hazards

Because most jobs involve some form of manual handling, most workers are at risk of manual handling injury.

Of course, not all manual handling tasks are hazardous; however, it is significant that over one quarter of all workplace injuries are caused by manual handling.

WorkSafe Victoria has published the *Children's Services – Occupational Health and Safety Kit: How to control the risks of the most common hazardous tasks in children's services sector*. This kit provides practical advice for the children's services sector about the principal hazardous manual handling tasks that cause workplace injuries in the children's services sector, and how to control the risks associated with these tasks to prevent injuries and help comply with OHS laws.



*One of the six major manual handling hazards is working at low levels with children.*

The six major manual handling hazards noted in this kit are:

- lifting children in/out of cots and highchairs, or on/off change tables
- working at low levels with children
- moving equipment
- storing supplies and equipment
- using office areas
- maintaining indoor and outdoor areas.

This kit is an excellent resource for addressing manual handling issues and is available for download from WorkSafe Victoria's website at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) (then select 'Publications' tab), or in hard copy by calling (03)

9641 1444 and selecting the 'publications' phone menu option.

There are several types of injuries associated with manual handling tasks. These are:

- muscle sprains and strains
- injuries to muscles, ligaments, intervertebral discs and other structures in the back
- injuries to soft tissues such as nerves, ligaments and tendons in the wrists, arms, shoulders, neck or legs
- abdominal hernias
- chronic pain.



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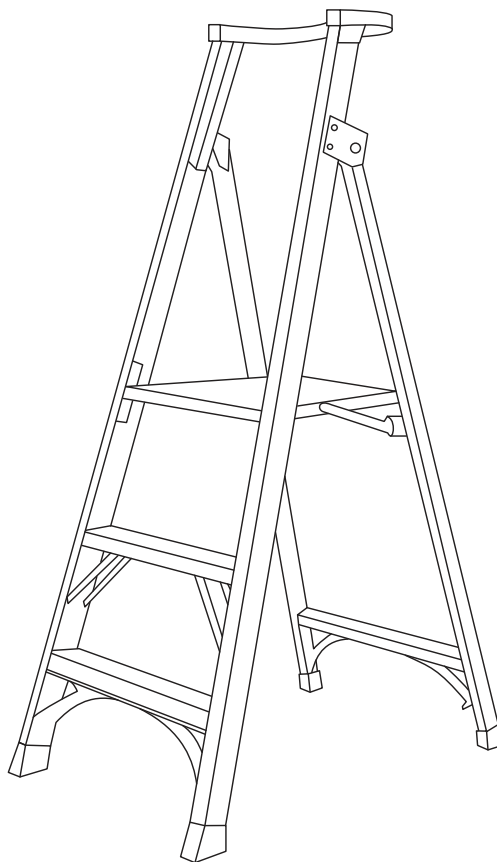


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In the OHS Regulations 2007, Part 3.1 Manual Handling, all of these conditions are referred to as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The Regulations define a MSD as an injury, illness or disease that arises in whole or in part from manual handling in the workplace, whether occurring suddenly or over a prolonged period of time.

As identified in section 3 roles and responsibilities, everyone involved in an early childhood organisation has a role to play in ensuring the service's operations are safe and without risk to health. This includes employers, in consultation with employees, applying the hazard management steps. As so much is known about what causes MSDs, there are specific forms that assist to apply the hazard management steps. These checklists are from WorkSafe Victoria's Code of Practice for Manual Handling published in 2000. The code and the checklists help to:

- identify if a manual handling task or activity is 'hazardous manual handling'
- if it is hazardous manual handling, provide guidance to further assess or analyse the risks
- then provide guidance to help effectively control these risks.



*Use a step ladder to reach objects in the top shelf.*

The Code of Practice for Manual Handling is available from WorkSafe Victoria's website [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) (then select 'Publications' tab), or in printed form by calling (03) 9641 1444 and selecting the 'publications' phone menu option.

For any manual handling tasks, correct techniques should always be considered and implemented. Below is a summary of correct techniques referred to as the **PLAN SMART** approach:

**PLAN** before you complete any manual handling tasks,

consider if you can eliminate the whole or part of the task or apply some control measures to reduce any manual handling risk.

**Size up the load/stable** base of support/secure the load.

**Move close to the load/** keep the load close to your waist.

**Always applying the semi-squat position.**

**Raise the object smoothly** and with your legs.

**Turn by moving on your feet,** avoid twisting movements.



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