

Legal stuff

There are specific regulations about manual handling that we have to follow. They require us to assess the risk of injury from manual handling and eliminate or reduce the risk.

The law requires the elimination of manual handling but where that isn't reasonably practicable the risks must be reduced and people involved in manual handling tasks must be instructed and trained.

Information

Injuries from manual handling are among the most common causes of injury at work; they account for around 30% of those reported to the Health and Safety Executive. Injuries caused by manual handling are often referred to as Musculoskeletal Disorders. They include damage to spinal discs, nerves and muscles, joint pain and repetitive strain injuries all to the upper body. They are often long term, painful and restrictive. It's estimated that they cost the British economy around £5.7 billion a year. That's the treatment cost to the health service, the cost employers of lost time, dealing with the incident, insurance costs etc, and to employees in loss of earnings.

If we all get it right we will both save the government a huge amount of money (our taxes) and also reduce the pain and suffering caused to working people by musculoskeletal disorders.

What is manual handling?

Manual handling is any activity that involves the lifting, carrying, moving, pushing or pulling of a load. Pushing or pulling a heavily loaded trolley will put your back under the same strain as lifting a load vertically or moving it horizontally.

What is the maximum load that is safe to lift?

There are no definitive safe limits. Much depends on the person lifting the load and the task itself. For example a tall person might easily lift a load and place it on a shelf at their waist height while a short person would struggle to lift the same load to the same height. So when we assess the risks from manual handling we have to consider the people doing the lifting, what is involved, the weight of the load and how the one affects the others.

Having said that there is official guidance that says a man should be able to lift a load of 25 kgs. (56 lbs.) to waist height once every 2 minutes, 30 times an hour, without risk. At the same rate a woman should be able to lift a load of 15 kgs. (33 lbs.) to waist height without risk.

If you have to lift loads above waist height, bend down to place them or hold them away from your body the safe limits are much reduced. Lighter loads lifted very frequently can also put you at risk of a musculoskeletal disorder.

Do.

- ✓ Know the weight of the load or carefully assess its weight before lifting it.
- ✓ Plan ahead, know where the load is going and check that it can be placed without difficulty or awkward movement.
- ✓ Be aware of your capacity to lift the load, if it can't be done by one person, ask for help. But remember that the load two people can safely carry is always less than double what a single person can carry.
- ✓ Keep your back straight, bend your knees and don't jerk upwards. Make your movements as smoothly as possible.
- ✓ Keep the load close to your body, avoid bending, twisting and stooping.
- ✓ Once the lift has been completed, put the item down slowly, adjust if necessary and gently reposition yourself.
- ✓ Remember that your ability will be reduced in cold and wet conditions.
- ✓ Use trolleys, pump trucks and other mechanical aids.
- ✓ Tell us if you think mechanical aids could replace or make a job less demanding.
- ✓ Tell us if you have an issue concerning manual handling, signs could be disastrous. Early action could prevent long



repetitive
ignoring the
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musculoskeletal problems.

Don't

- ✗ Cut corners. Always plan your handling tasks so that they are done so safely and securely.
- ✗ Overestimate your abilities.
- ✗ Rush into moving an unfamiliar load.
- ✗ Ignore aches and pains that occur after manual handling tasks. Tell us about them.



FAQs

1. What can be done to prevent manual handling injuries in the workplace?

Where heavy loads are lifted or moved always consider whether mechanical handling arrangements could be used. Consider pump or pallet trucks, conveyers, forklift trucks, load balancers, lifting tables, etc. Where loads are moved on trolleys could they be mechanised, would larger wheels make them easier to move.

2. Are there any statutory weight limits for manual handling?

The law does not impose a maximum weight limit. People's abilities vary with age, health, height and other factors such as the size and weight of the load and where it is being to and from. So employers must manage and control the risks on a person to person basis and the circumstances of the task. The guidelines for maximum loads shown on the poster apply to straight lifts of a regular sized load.

3. As an employer, what should a manual handling training course contain?

Training is an important element to raising awareness and reducing the risks from manual handling. It should relate to the workplace and the load or loads being moved. An offsite session involving boxes of regular shape is not suitable training for workers who are moving drums or irregular sized loads whether they are heavier or lighter. Good manual handling training will be tailored to the individual workplace and workforce.

4. Should PPE be provided for manual handling operations?

PPE can be of benefit where the work is taking place in cold or wet weather or in cold stores. Your ability to lift is reduced in cold and wet weather. Where the load being moved has a coarse or rough texture gloves will be required. Where there is a risk of injury to the feet from a dropped load protective footwear will be required. Every situation needs its own assessment.

5. What is the correct lifting technique that should be used?

There is no single correct way to lift. The technique for lifting things will depend on a number of things such as the weight and size of the object being lifted. It is, for example, easier to pick up a box that has handholds than something that is awkwardly shaped, or a package where the weight is not evenly distributed.

6. Should packages and loads be labelled with their weight?

The regulations say that where it is reasonably practicable, packages and loads should be labelled with their weight. You will see the weight marked on many of the boxes and loads we receive. Objects that have to be moved as part of our processes won't be labelled; we know the weight and the correct, safe way to move them.

7. Do these rules and arrangements apply to moving and handling patients and service users?

The requirement to protect people at work from the risks of manual handling applies everywhere. However the needs of the patient and service user must also be considered and taken into account. Because they can move whilst being lifted you are at an increased risk of injury; the load you are lifting can change and you could be put off balance. We will have assessed specific requirements for each patient and this will be set out in their care plan. This is the only safe way to move them; follow your professional and our in-house training.

8. We supply products to other firms where they may be manually handled. Should we label them with their weight even though we don't manually handle them?

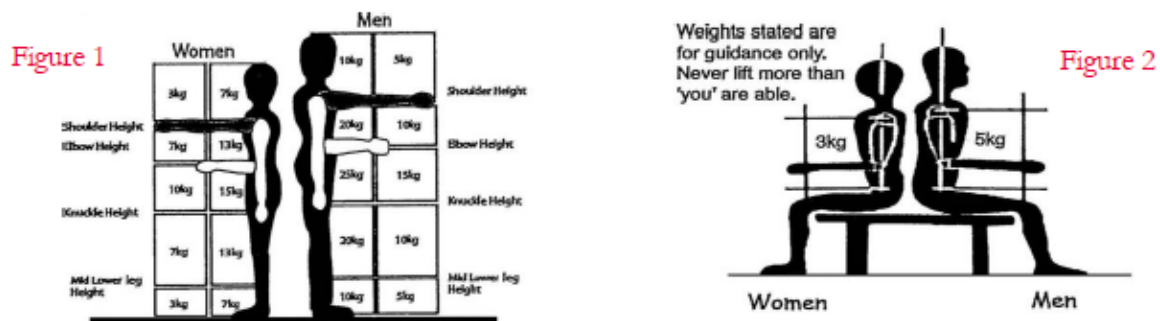
If it is reasonably practicable to do so and there is a risk of injury from handling the load we should show their weight. Loads that are unbalanced should be marked clearly with their weight and centre of gravity.

Manual Handling

Tasks involving the regular lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling of heavy loads must be assessed for risks to the health and safety of workers. Routine and frequent tasks involving manual handling should be eliminated, wherever possible, by providing mechanical aids, adapting the workstation or redesigning the work process.

Employees should always be trained in specific workplace procedures and the general principles of manual handling described in this poster.

Do not lift more than you can safely push or carry. Carefully assess each load before you lift it. If you consider it beyond your ability, ask your managers for advice. Figure 1 shows recommended maximum weights when standing; figure 2, whilst seated.



STOP AND THINK – Plan work that involves manual handling. How heavy is the load? Where is it going to be placed use appropriate handling aids where possible. Will assistance be required? Remove obstructions, such as discarded wrapping materials. For long lifts, such as from floor to shoulder height, consider resting the load mid-way on a table or a bench to change grip.



ADOPT A STABLE POSITION – Stand with feet apart, one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load if it is on the ground). Be prepared to move your feet during the lift to maintain a stable posture. Do not wear over-tight clothing or unsuitable footwear; it may make the task more difficult.

KEEP THE LOAD CLOSE TO YOUR WAIST – While lifting keep the load close to your waist for as long as possible. The distance of the load from the spine at waist height is an important factor in the overall load on the spine and back muscles. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it



KEEP YOUR BACK AS STRAIGHT AS POSSIBLE – Slightly bending your back and knees at the start of the lift is preferable to either fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (full or deep squatting), but it should be avoided wherever possible.

DON'T FLEX ANY FURTHER WHILE LIFTING – This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.

AVOID TWISTING THE BACK OR LEANING SIDeways, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR BACK IS BENT – Keep your shoulders level and facing the same direction as your hips. Turning by moving your feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.