

What are Musculoskeletal Disorders?

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are injuries and disorders of bones, muscles, nerves and other soft tissues in the musculoskeletal system. MSDs can occur when a single load is lifted, lowered, pushed, pulled or carried in a manner that is beyond a worker's capabilities, possibly resulting in an overexertion injury. MSDs can also develop over time where workers perform manual handling tasks repeatedly or work with awkward postures.

Musculoskeletal Disorder Hazards

When workers are placed at a new assignment, they will often complete tasks that involve using muscles that they haven't used for some time, require standing for extended periods or complete a repetitive task over the course of a shift. This can contribute to MSDs when starting an assignment. This may involve one or more of the following:

- Force (lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, lowering and gripping)
- Fixed or awkward posture (reaching)
- Repetition
- Work organization
- Work methods

The supervisor should provide the worker with the workplace specific requirements for the process and workplace best practices to ensure minimal impact of MSDs. Taking regular breaks, setting up a proper work station and obtaining a buddy for lifting are just a few ways that injuries can be avoided.

Early Signs of Musculoskeletal Disorders

Many body parts can be affected by the job a worker is doing. The **back** is the most common, followed by the shoulders, neck, elbow, hands and wrists. The symptoms from MSDs generally include:

- Pain with or without movement
- Swelling and tenderness
- Reduced range of motion and/or stiffness and
- Tingling and/or numbness

Early detection is key to preventing further discomfort or a potential injury. Workers should advise their site supervisor and a Bagg Group Representative if they experience any of these symptoms while on assignment.

Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders

Workers can protect themselves by following some simple steps when given an assignment to prevent injury of MSDs.

On the Job: Maintaining a healthy posture



Adjust chair height so that your feet are flat on the floor. This will keep your knees and torso at roughly the same height. To find this height, stand by the chair and raise or lower the seat pan to just below your elbows bent between 90 and 110 degrees. Take care that your elbows are not winged out, but instead hang at a comfortable, fairly vertical alignment. Your forearms should be parallel to the ground and your wrists in a neutral position. Since most desks are fixed height, it is best to adjust the chair height for the correct position of the arms and hands. Then, if necessary, provide support for the feet so that the undersides thighs are just supported at the edge of the seat.

Keep your wrist posture neutral. Avoid bending your wrist sharply upwards or downwards to type. If possible, use a split-design or tented-and-raised keyboard; otherwise, simply try to use a spacious one. To help your wrists “float” over the keyboard, use a wrist rest; however, only use it if it actually elevates your wrists; depending on your position, this might actually encourage you to hold your hands at a bad angle.

Change your posture regularly. Regardless of how healthy your work posture is, sitting in any one position for an extended period is not healthy. If you have an adjustable chair, alternate between the following positions all of which will keep your pose neutral and relaxed:

- Sit upright – keep your torso roughly vertical, your thighs horizontal and your lower legs vertical.
- Sit reclined – Tilt the backrest of your chair back so that your torso reclines between 105 and 120 degrees from your thighs
- Sit declined – Tilt the seat pan of your chair slightly so that the angle between your thighs and torso is slightly more than 90 degrees. Don’t overdo this or you will feel like you’re sliding.

Alternatively, stand. If your desk is adjustable (or you can get another work station), stand. You can keep a footrest nearby and take turns resting your legs on it. Note that staying on your feet all day, while healthy, can make them sore; this position might be best for a job that doesn’t require long periods at the desk (or can accommodate a small, secondary standing workspace).

On the Job: Setting Up Your Workstation



Keep your monitor between 20 and 40 inches (50 and 100 centimeters) from your face. This will reduce eye strain. If the depth of your desk doesn’t allow this, move your monitor to a corner or purchase an attachable computer tray to create a deeper working surface.

Adjust monitor so that the center sits at eye level. The monitor should always be directly in front of your face (preferably no more than 35 degrees to either side) and at or slightly below eye level.

Place your keyboard so that your upper arms hang vertically. Don't extend your arms far forwards or bend your elbows back to type.

Keep your keyboard at an acceptable height. To reach the keyboard, your forearms should bend no more than 20 degrees above horizontal (if sitting) or 45 below (if standing).

Place mouse near keyboard. Keep it in a position that will enable you to transition between typing and using the mouse with as little effect on your arm and wrist posture as possible. If you have a 10-key on the right side of your keyboard, you may want to use your mouse on the left side; this centers the part of your keyboard that you use most. You can also alternate left and right-sided mouse usage to dilute the effects of repetitive use.

Arrange items within sight and reach. Place your phone, writing equipment, books and other frequently-used items within easy reach from where you sit. You should not need to stretch to reach frequently used objects. If you use a document holder, do not place it to one side of your monitor. Turning your head in one direction for prolonged periods fatigues the neck muscles. Instead, position the document holder directly beneath the monitor angling it between the monitor and keyboard.

At the Worker

- Advise the staffing specialist during the interview of any limitations, previous injuries or health concerns to ensure they are placed at a Client location that is suitable
- Follow good health habits by stretching all muscles on a daily basis prior to their shift and eating healthy
- Follow the instruction of the site supervisor on best practices (keep your work station organized, alternate tasks to avoid repetitive movements, take breaks etc.)
- Know their limitations and advise the supervisor and a Bagg Group staffing specialist if they experience any pain or discomfort immediately

Reporting Procedures

Should a worker experience any of the above symptoms, they should advise the site supervisor and a Bagg Group representative **immediately**. The Bagg Group will work with all parties to prevent further injury by following the steps necessary for the worker's safety.