

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Painful disorders of muscles, tendons, and nerves that develop over time from tasks that repeatedly cause stress and injury to tissues

Common causes



Material handling

injuries due to repeated lifting, pushing and pulling



Workstation

furniture, layout, job design and keyboarding



Repetitive motion injuries

risk factors due to job design, awkward body motions, and tools



Inadequate job design

pace of work, production pressure, lack of sufficient time to recover from overwork



Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most frequent type of lost-time injury and the single largest source of lost-time costs in Canada.

What employers can do

Hazards are best eliminated at the source. Employers should focus on avoiding repetitive patterns of work through **job design** changes:



Mechanization

automate tasks



Team work

distributing work more evenly



Job rotation

moving between different tasks



Job enlargement

increasing the variety of tasks

If elimination of repetitive patterns of work is not possible, prevention strategies can focus on:



Workplace design

fitting the workstation to the worker



Assistive devices

using carts, hoists, or other mechanical handling devices



Work practices

training workers, allowing rest periods, and giving workers more job control



Tool and equipment design

providing proper tools that decrease the force and avoid awkward positions

Symptoms

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) do not happen overnight.



WATCH FOR SIGNS

Pain, joint stiffness, muscle tightness, redness, swelling of the affected area, numbness, “pins and needles” sensations, skin colour changes

Being aware of the causes and developing a prevention program is essential. Inform and train workers, encourage early reporting of symptoms, and identify and control job-related risk factors.