



**EUROPEAN SAFETY WEEK  
“LIGHTEN THE LOAD” CAMPAIGN  
PREVENTING MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS**



**NATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY FUNCTION (NHSF), 2022**

**PREVENTING MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (MSDs) IN CLINICAL SETTINGS**

Employees working in clinical areas can potentially be exposed to injuries such as muscle and ligament strain, joint and tendon inflammation, pinched nerves and other injuries from ergonomic stressors during handling, transferring and repositioning of patients. The NHSF have developed practical guidance and useful tips on the management of MSDs and post injury rehabilitation which are available [here](#).



**Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2020-22  
LIGHTEN THE LOAD**  
Prevention and management of work-related musculoskeletal disorders

**Risk factors to consider:**

**Awkward Postures**

Reaching, carrying, and performing tasks in positions of discomfort and awkwardness promote the risk of back/neck pain and inflammation of the upper limbs.

**Repetitive Tasks/Motions**

Moving and handling tasks such as turning or repositioning patients in a bed and transferring to/from a wheelchair can require force and repetition. These repetitive tasks can result in back, neck and shoulder injuries.



**Patient Handling**

When handling, transferring and repositioning patients, staff can be exposed to injuries such as muscle / ligament strain, joint and tendon inflammation.

**Inadequate workspace**

Cluttered corridors, patient bathrooms and bedsides can lead to inadequate clearance space. This can lead to poor patient moving & handling techniques being used.

**Planning your Manual Handling Activities:**

Managers must carry out [risk assessments](#) in order to identify and quantify ergonomic risk.



Communicate and consult with employees at all stages of the process. This will ensure the nature of the work activities are understood.



Implement appropriate changes in work practice and provision of relevant training and/or equipment.



**Manual Handling:** Follow the Principles of good Manual Handling as per [HSE’s Manual Handling and People Handling Policy](#), 2018 and [Manual Handling Training](#).

Plan for a safe lift—TILE (Task, Individual, Load, Environment)

1. Consider where the lift is to take place and where the load is going
2. Test the weight. Is the load within your capability? Do you need help? Is a mechanical aid available?
3. Is the load an awkward shape? Could the contents be hot/cold?
4. Check for obstructions, slippery floors, etc.

**Equipment:** Manual handling aids can reduce the risk of injury when used correctly and should be used where available.

Consider the following :

- Sit /stand hoists
- Full body hoist
- Electric beds
- Rope ladders
- Monkey poles
- Handling belts
- Sliding sheets
- Wheel chairs



## Factors to consider when selecting new patient moving and handling aids/equipment (non exhaustive list);

- The purchasing of new equipment is a significant investment. To ensure it works in practice a multi disciplinary approach should be used for the consultation & review process
- Seek advice from suppliers on the suitability of new lifting and handling equipment for your service
- Check the equipment is CE-marked and has the safe working load (SWL) identified
- Consider whether the equipment will suit the area it will be used in, e.g. is there enough space to manoeuvre the equipment?
- Check the equipment is suitable for the floor area in terms of stability and floor surface
- Does the equipment require an electric socket for charging?
- Is there a register of patient moving & handling equipment, to be included in this register.
- Consider what maintenance will be required, who will be responsible for ensuring it takes place & where will records be maintained?
- How is the equipment cleaned and where will it be stored?
- Consider other factors associated with introducing lifting and handling aids/equipment, e.g. infection prevention and control requirements (IPC), training, information/support & updating the services risk assessment

## People Handling Risk Assessment

Written individual people handling risk assessments must be completed for each service user. The aim of this assessment is to clarify safe methods of handling each service user and to develop a handling care plan so that injury to staff may be avoided and service user care & safety are enhanced.

The assessment should be carried out on admission/referral or as soon as is reasonably practicable. This assessment must be reviewed regularly and not less frequently than every four months or when the initial assessment is no longer considered valid, e.g. if the service user's condition improves or deteriorates or their management plan changes. Further information on completion of individual people handling risk assessments is available in the

[Manual Handling & People Handling Policy](#).

Handling Plan			
People Handling Risk Level: <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low as per the handling risk assessment			
Are there any special considerations about this service user? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes			
If yes please detail briefly			
Activity	Date	No of Carers / Equipment / service user action/ comments	Initials
Re-positioning			
Consider use of		• hoist • sliding sheets • monkey pole	
Sitting forwards			
Consider use of		• electric bed • hoist • rope ladder	
Sitting to standing			
Consider use of		• hoist • standing hoist • handling belt	
Walking / stairs			
Consider use of		• walker • trolley/frame • crutches • stick	
Toileting			
Consider use of		• standing hoist • commode • toilet riser	
Bath/Showers			
Consider use of		• hoist • shower chair	
Transport and Other Activities			
Advice re use of		• wheelchair • cot/cotboard • transfer board	

## Training

A training needs assessment (TNA) must be carried out for staff to ensure all relevant training is undertaken. It is a statutory requirement for all employees to attend [manual handling training](#) relevant to their role, work activities and work environment. This training can be provided locally in services that have Manual Handling Instructors in place.

Training can also be booked directly with **Usafety** at **091-485580** or [training@usafety.ie](mailto:training@usafety.ie).

All manual handling training is funded locally, with the exception of Instructor Training which is funded by the NHSF and booked through the [Health and Safety Helpdesk](#). For more information on training please visit the NHSF [training section](#) on the website.

## Manual Handling Policy

This policy is applicable across all services within the HSE, and covers all manual handling and people handling activities undertaken by employees during the course of their work. Bariatric guidelines are also available and both documents can be accessed on the [NHSF website](#).

