

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training

for DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS



Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training for Direct Support Professionals

While working as a Direct Support Professional, your role includes assisting people with a variety of activities of daily living either within their home, or in the community. Without proper training, however, employees are at risk of injuries such as strains and tendonitis. These Musculo-skeletal Disorders, or MSDs, are becoming more common, but they can be prevented.



In today's video, we'll discuss the importance of proper training and risk assessment.

Working with supervisors and Joint Health and Safety Committees, we can all minimize employee injuries in the home or community setting.

Please note that not all these solutions will work in your specific environment. By conducting a risk assessment and holding discussions with your supervisor and Joint Health and Safety Committee you can develop individual solutions to support people at home or in the community.

Let's define some of the terms used in this video.

Participatory MSD Prevention Program – this is a program where key stakeholders come together to review what the risk factors are and come up with suitable solutions for that risk. Often times you'll find that a supervisor will be involved, the joint health and safety committee workers and supervisors in order to develop those safe practices.



Biomechanics is the practice of using one's body in a comfortable and safe posture.

Activities of Daily Living, or ADL's if you're in the business are those activities where we're assisting those that need help to do their daily regime – going to the grocery store, doing their laundry, helping with hygiene, recreational activities that they want to participate in – we're there to assist.

Assisting People with Mobility – any activity whereby an employee is exerting effort to position, move or physically assist another person.

Ergonomics is the study of human movement. We look at how the work or recreational activity is performed and how it can be designed to fit the person instead of the person having to adjust their own body and position to that task or recreation activity.

Consider symptoms serious that last all day or continue through the night and are still there in the morning. Whenever you have symptoms, regardless of duration, report them to your supervisor as soon as possible to minimize the risk of long-term injury.

With a personalized prevention plan in place, worker will recover more quickly and they can continue their job of supporting people who require assistance.

Participatory MSD Prevention Program, consisting of, support professionals, health and safety committees and supervisors can identify MSD risk factors and write policies, procedures and safe work practices to minimize hazards in the workplace.



For a prevention program to be effective, employees must be properly trained and monitored and safe work practices must be implemented and adjusted as gaps are identified.

One of the best ways to prevent injury is to keep physically fit. Eating properly and managing your weight allow you to perform the daily tasks required by a support professional.

Aches and pains are normal as we age, but it's important to deal with them early on and consult with your supervisor. Remember, you're the best person to look after you!

Proper biomechanics and posture will help you prevent injury. Follow these general principles when lifting items and assisting people.

- Use a wide, split-leg stance
- Keep your upper body in its safe 'S' curve
- Keep loads close to your body
- When picking up items from the floor, bend from the knees, not from the waist
- Push instead of pull whenever possible
- It's better to move several small items than one large item
- Take stretch breaks and rotate tasks to prevent injury.

Risk Assessment

Performing a Risk Assessment helps determine the best way to keep yourself and others safe.

Here's an example. Before attempting to assist a person with ambulation consider the following questions:

- Is the path free of hazards?
- Can equipment help in any way?
- How do you expect the person to react?
- How are you feeling; do you need help?
- How urgent is the action?
- Is the equipment set up correctly?

CARE Mobility Review

Before helping a person move, perform a CARE Mobility Review.

C is for Communication. Make eye contact. Is the person you're supporting able to follow your direction?

A is for Ability. Has there been a change in physical ability or energy level? Can the person move their legs or arms? Can they help? Are they drowsy?

R is for Resistance. Is the person agitated or not co-operating?

E is for Equipment/ Environment Are there any obstacles along the travel path? Is the equipment functioning and positioned appropriately? If you're using a sling, is it the proper type and size? Is the bed or equipment correctly positioned?

Injury Prevention

Here are four more ways to protect your back and shoulders:

- Don't carry heavy items with one hand
- Don't store frequently-used or heavy items overhead
- Don't work at or near your own physical limits
- Don't work at or below knee height

When it comes to lifting, keep in mind the LITE concept:

L is for Load - Consider how heavy the object is.

I is for Individual - Are you ready and able to handle the lift?

T is for Task - Are all the tools available and ready?

E is for Environment - Is there enough light? Is the floor even?

For the direct support professional, every day brings different tasks and challenges. That's what keeps the job interesting, yet these daily activities can lead to injuries.

It's important to keep you and the people you're supporting safe at all times.

Preventing injuries can start with basic things like proper footwear. Indoors, you'll need comfortable, closed-toe shoes with non-slip soles and no heels.

Outdoors, especially in winter, you'll need sturdy non-slip boots.

Many MSD injuries are caused by improper biomechanics and poor posture. This may be aggravated by how frequently we perform the task, if we're new to the job or just getting older.

See if you can see the difference in biomechanics in the following daily tasks.

When mopping the floor, long reaches and twists at the waist are risky.

Bend knees and move feet to eliminate long reaches rather than move about the waist. Take shorter strokes to reduce chance of injury.

Use the same technique when vacuuming.



Loading and unloading the dishwasher is a routine task. What movements can this support professional improve to avoid strains and discomfort? For better biomechanics, bend the knees and rotate the feet rather than the waist.



Standing at the kitchen sink peeling vegetables or assisting with meal preparation can be hard on your back. Consider taking a stretch break, or open the bottom cupboard so you can rest one foot on a shelf.



Making and turning down beds is another daily task that can lead to injury. Rather than twisting at the waist, move your feet to improve your posture and minimize the chance of a strain. When turning down a bed, avoid reaching across the mattress. Instead, shorten your reach by working on both sides of the bed.

Even removing clothes from the dryer can lead to injury. To reduce the chance of injury: Support yourself by bending your knees rather than using your back to do the work.



Lifting objects from the floor is a common cause of injury, especially when you bend at the waist. It's better to bend your knees and bring the load close to your body as you stand up so you're using your legs, not your back.

Always try to avoid working at or below knee height. Look for a way to work upright – you'll be more comfortable.

Bending over to clean a tub is a common practice but a risky one. With the help of longhanded tools, you can perform the task with less chance of injury.



Winter brings snow shoveling and back injuries if we're not careful. Consider these tips:



- Before you head outside, do some stretches to warm up your muscles. Cold tight muscles are more prone to injury.
- An ergonomic shovel with a curved or adjustable handle can minimize painful bending. Bend your knees and back slightly while keeping the shovel on the ground.
- Choose a lightweight shovel with a plastic blade.
- Whenever possible, push the snow to the side rather than lifting it.
- If you must lift move small quantities at a time.
- Keep your hips and shoulder facing the object you are lifting and move your feet to prevent twisting at the waist.
- Pace yourself and take breaks.

When using a mechanical lift, think about the risks before you begin. Consider; extending the lift strap to reach the ceiling track first, this prevents overhead reaching with a weight. Take an extra minute or two to figure out how to minimize lifting, especially when reaching overhead at an awkward angle.

Helping someone get dressed maybe easier if both person's are standing.

Lastly, never try to break another person's fall and hold them in a standing position. Instead, control the person's fall to the floor as you've been trained.

As Direct Support Professionals, we need to help others and maintain our own health at the same time. It's our responsibility to assess the risk and act accordingly to minimize MSDs. You can reduce your chance of injury by following these four steps:

- Keep yourself healthy
- Report hazards to your Supervisor as soon as possible
- Talk to your Joint Health and Safety Committee, and
- Use the equipment provided in the correct manner

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does MSD stand for in terms of injuries?
 - a. Sprains/strains, carpal tunnel, tendonitis, rotator cuff;
 - b. Headache, stomach ache, sinus pain, broken finger nail
 - c. Influenza, common cold, pneumonia, SARS
 - d. None of the above.

2. What are the most common injuries in the field of Developmental Services?
 - a. Wrist and hand injuries
 - b. Back and Shoulder Strains
 - c. Knee injuries
 - d. None of the above

3. List 3 signs and symptoms of MSD's
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test

4. What should you do when a MSD injury is first suspected?
 - a. Continue working and forget about it;
 - b. Stop working and go home;
 - c. Recognize (treat before it becomes chronic), report to Manager/Supervisor, get treatment when symptoms appear, rest and ice affected area
 - d. None of the above

5. What are the three basic principles for proper biomechanics? (Choose three (3))
 - a. Keep weight close to body;
 - b. Keep your upper body in its safe 'S' curve;
 - c. Pull instead of push whenever possible;
 - d. Take stretch breaks and rotate tasks whenever possible.

6. What does CARE stand for in the CARE Mobility review?
 - a. Caring, Ability, Research and Ergonomics
 - b. Communication, Ability, Resistance and Equipment
 - c. Customized, Action, Results and Equipment
 - d. None of the above

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test

7. When lifting, what is the LITE concept stand for?
- a. Load, Individual, Task and Environment
 - b. Lifting, Inspection, Task and Environment
 - c. Load, Inquire, Tension and Equal
 - d. None of the above.
8. When moving an object from side to side, you should always...?
- a. Bend down, bending your back
 - b. Pivot (move whole body) DO NOT TWIST.
 - c. Sit on a chair
9. What factors contribute to back pain?
- a. Poor body mechanics;
 - b. Poor posture;
 - c. Forceful exertion;
 - d. Loss of flexibility;
 - e. Loss of physical fitness;
 - f. All of the above.

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test

10. Before using a snow shovel you should always? Circle all that apply.
- a. Before you head outside, do some stretches to warm muscles
 - b. Choose a lightweight shovel with plastic blade
 - c. Whenever possible lift the snow rather than pushing it
 - d. Pace yourself and take breaks
 - e. All of the above
11. What are some common causes of MSDs?
- a. Manual lifting, repositioning or transferring;
 - b. Using lift devices incorrectly;
 - c. Awkward postures when providing personal care;
 - d. All of the above.
12. If someone is agitated when doing a lift or transfer, you must...?
- a. Get assistance from other support staff and hold the person down;
 - b. Leave the person until they are calm and try again;
 - c. Ignore their agitation and lift them anyway;
 - d. Ask them to move themselves

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test

13. What is the first and major rule for safe lifting?
- a. Always try to lift person by yourself first to see if there are any difficulties;
 - b. Always consider the use of a mechanical aid first;
 - c. Always have the person sitting on a sofa for easier lifting;
 - d. Always consider lifting at chest level.
14. Before using a mechanical lift you should always?
- a. Visually check sling and mechanical lift
 - b. Check sling only
 - c. Check mechanical lift only
 - d. None of the above
15. If someone you support is about to fall you should?
- a. Move out of the way as quickly as possible
 - b. Intervene and ensure you catch them before they fall
 - c. Support the person's fall to the floor as you've been trained.

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test

16. What are the 4 steps you can take to reduce your chance of MSD injury?
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test - Answers

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3. List 3 signs and symptoms of MSD's

Choose from Aching, Burning, Cramping, Discomfort, Fatigue, Pain and Weakness

Musculoskeletal Disorder Injury Prevention Training Pre & Post Test - Answers

4. What should you do when a MSD injury is first suspected?
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