

Back Care and Manual Handling

Manual handling means any activity requiring the use of force exerted by the person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person or object.

Manual handling injuries can be the result of incorrect manual handling techniques, overuse, or from accidents. Injuries include back strains, and sprains in other parts of the body such as the neck, arm, shoulder and knee, bruising and lacerations.

Employers and managers have a legal duty to provide safe workplaces and implement safe workplace practices.

Principles of Preventing Manual Handling Injuries

- Eliminate or reduce the amount of manual handling.
- Reduce the amount of bending, forward reaching, and twisting, in all tasks.
- Reduce worker fatigue.
- Keep all equipment in good working order.
- Keep the workplace environment safe.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Provide annual training in manual handling and back care
- Display written, current information regarding manual handling in the staff room
- Ensure equipment and facilities are designed and maintained to reduce manual handling injuries
- Ensure work practices are consistent with safe manual handling guidelines
- Ensure educators and staff follow our safe manual handling procedures
- Identify, assess and control all risks associated with manual handling
- Clearly mark any equipment which requires more than one person to lift or move it.

Prevent manual handling injuries

- Do warm-up exercises for three to five minutes before starting work, particularly during cold periods. Simple exercises to warm and stretch all the major muscle groups help prevent injury. Regular exercise such as walking, tennis, or aerobics will help condition muscles, but anyone with neck, back or muscular problems should see a doctor before exercising.
- Kneel rather than bend down e.g. to help a child put their shoes on
- Sit rather than bend e.g. to comfort a child, educators will sit on the floor and encourage the child to sit on their lap
- Sit in an appropriate sized chair (or on the floor) so their upper legs are horizontal to hips and feet flat on the floor
- Sit in an appropriate sized chair and table to complete writing tasks (eg programming)
- Carry children with one arm under the child's buttocks and the other arm supporting the child's back, with the child facing them as close as possible to their body
- Not carry a child on their hip because this can strain the back, and only carry children when necessary
- Lift safely and avoid twisting, especially with awkward loads
- Lift a child out of a cot by leaning against the cot and raising the child as close as possible to their body. Educators and staff will not stretch over and lift
- Help larger children to climb up steps/ladder provided to change table
- Use a step ladder to reach above shoulder level
- Avoid extended reaching forward e.g. leaning into low equipment boxes
- Share the load if the equipment is heavy, long or awkward
- Ask for help and organise a team lift when sliding, pulling or pushing equipment that is not easy to move e.g. trestles or gym mats
- Rearrange surroundings to meet the needs of both children and adults where possible
- Use equipment and furniture that can be moved around as safely and easily as possible
- Store seldom-used objects up high between the shoulder-to-raised arm height



- Avoid storing objects between a person's knuckles and the floor
- Use mechanical aids like ladders and trolleys where possible to avoid lifting and stretching

Reduce accidents by implementing good housekeeping practices including ensuring:

- The floors and other walking surfaces are uncluttered, even and non-slippery
- The environment is tidy
- There is adequate space to work
- Equipment is maintained regularly
- Lighting is adequate.

How to Lift Safely

- Place your feet in astride position
- Keep your breastbone as elevated as possible
- Bend your knees
- Brace your stomach muscles.
- Hold the object close to your centre of gravity i.e. around your navel
- Move your feet not your spine
- Prepare to move in a forward-facing direction
- Ask for help when it is not possible to lift on your own

Avoid Twisting when Lifting

To avoid injuries result from twisting educators and staff will:

- Move equipment when children are not around
- Rearrange storage so that it is easier and safer to replace and remove items
- Lift only within the limits of their strength
- Use beds and equipment that are easy to move
- Ensure they can see where they are going when carrying equipment or children
- Be especially careful when lifting a child with special needs.

Organising a Team Lift

Educators and staff will:

- Ask a colleague who is willing and able to help, and ideally is fairly well matched with them in size and strength
- Agree on a plan of action to achieve a coordinated lift
- Appoint one person as team leader to 'call' the lift.

How to Assess the Correct Storage and Shelving Height

Correct storage and shelving height is important to prevent slips, falls and strains:

To check the height at which it is safest for each individual to work, stand with feet together and hands by sides:

- The best height range for handling loads is around waist level .
- The acceptable height for lifting is any point between the individual's knuckle and shoulder.
- **Seldom-used objects** can be stored at the shoulder-to-raised arm height (use ladders to avoid stretching).
- **Avoid storing objects** at a level between an individual's knuckles and the floor.
- **Mechanical aids such as ladders and trolleys should be used where** possible to avoid lifting.



Manual Handling

Sustained Awkward Postures	One in which any part of the body is in an uncomfortable or unnatural position for a period of time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crouching ○ Lying, sitting, kneeling, or squatting on the floor with children
Repetitive Movement	Means using the same parts of the body to repeat similar movements repeatedly over a period of time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Typing and other keyboard tasks
Sustained Movement	Means using the same parts of the body to hold a similar movement over a period of time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sitting at small tables and chairs, ○ Reading a story
Application of High Force	Occurs in a task that requires some effort. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ pushing or pulling an object that is hard to move e.g. Trolley, play equipment
Exposed to Sustained Vibration	Vibration transferred from tools or machinery to the operators' body.
Handling of Live People or Animals	Handling of live people or animal is hazardous because their movement can't always be anticipated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distressed Child
Handling of loads that are Unstable, Unbalanced, or difficult to Hold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loads that are unstable or unbalanced can move or change shape suddenly, or are uneven or heavier on one side. ○ Loads that are difficult to hold include reams of large paper, balance boards, high chairs or loads that are very slippery, floppy, sharp, hot or cold.

Source: Staying Healthy in Childcare, Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, Early Years Learning Framework, National Quality Standard, Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004

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National Quality Standard – NQS

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

2.3.2 Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect Children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

3.1.1 Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose.

3.1.2 Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.



Education and Care Service National Regulations

103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment

