

Manual Handling Procedure

1. Purpose

Manual handling is a risk in nearly every workplace. It is a broad term which covers a variety of activities including lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, holding, restraining, throwing and carrying. Where these are not conducted safely injury may result.

Most roles will require some degree of manual handling however not all manual handling tasks are hazardous.

This procedure operates pursuant to the ICH Workplace Health and Safety Policy.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, Board members, volunteers, students, trainees and contractors. For the purposes of this procedure, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

3. Procedure

Manual handling can result in injuries such as:

- Sprains and strains
- Back injuries
- Soft tissue injuries
- Chronic or acute pain

This can happen:

- Slowly through gradual wear and tear from repetitive or continuous movements
- Suddenly through strenuous activity or unexpected movements

ICH seeks to protect workers from injury through appropriate risk management processes which addresses manual handling.

3.1 Identification of Risks

Manual handling may be identified through:

- Team meetings
- Regular inspection of the workplace/tasks performed
- Risk assessments for service user visits, activities and events
- Supervision
- Reviewing injury records

Workers should also report any manual handling risks to their Manager.

3.2 Factors to Consider

When undertaking manual handling tasks, it is important to consider the:

- Capacity of the individual
- Nature of the load
- Environmental conditions
- Training

Factors which substantially increase the risk of injury include:

- Previous injuries
- Overreaching
- Significant bending or twisting
- Heavy/bulky items
- Awkward postures or loads (e.g. slippery, difficult to grasp, etc.)
- Forceful actions
- Repetition of tasks for a long period
- Sudden movements
- Environment – risk of slips, trips or falls, space available to move, etc.
- Location of the object – lifting heavy objects above shoulder height or from below knee level
- Duration and frequency – increasing the length of time or frequency of handling
- Client's size, weight, their willingness to cooperate (i.e. lifting a child)

A hazardous task includes any that involves one or more:

- Repetitive movements
- Repetitive or sustained forces
- High or sudden forces
- Sustained or awkward postures
- Exposure to vibrations

3.3 Prior to Completing the Task

To reduce or eliminate the level of risk, workers should consider:

- Changing the task - is the task required to be carried out or is there an alternative method, can other people assist
- Changing the object – making loads smaller or easier to carry/move
- Changing the workplace – for example, ergonomic furniture and having equipment easily accessible, reducing the distance to carry loads
- Changing the environmental conditions – such as heat and cold, ensuring that the area/route is safe and removing any obstructions
- Using manual handling equipment – such as trolleys and chair movers
- Changing the nature of the work – taking regular breaks, rotating tasks
- Training

Workers should only engage in manual handling activities where they:

- Have assessed that they have the capacity to perform the activities safely
- Have considered controls to reduce or eliminate the level of risk
- Use safe manual handling principles

If a worker is unsure, the ICH Manual Handling Checklist may be used to assess and control the risk.

A written risk assessment is required for any task that is deemed to be a hazardous manual task. Risk assessments should identify:

- Postures, movements and forces that pose a risk
- When they may become dangerous
- Why they are happening
- Ways to eliminate or mitigate the risk

3.4 Principles for Safe Manual Handling

General principles for safe manual handling include:

- Warm up with gentle stretches before engaging in manual work
- Check the environment to try and remove obstructions, reduce bending, twisting and stretching as required
- Adopt a stable position with one foot slightly forward to maintain balance, move as required to maintain balance
- Get a good grip on the object
- The preferred starting posture includes slight bending of back, hips and knees rather than fully bending (i.e. stopping or squatting)
- Don't bend your back while lifting, lift the load first and then straighten legs
- Keep the load close to the waist with the heaviest side close to the body
- Never attempt to lift or carry a load if it may be too heavy
- Use manual handling equipment to help lift or carry heavy loads whenever possible
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways particularly while the back is bent. Shoulders should be level and face the same direction as hips while lifting or carrying items
- Pushing a load is better than pulling as it uses your bodyweight
- Move smoothly without haste or jerky movements
- Only handle items where it is safe to do so, ask for assistance
- Take breaks and adjust the grip where needed
- Cool down after heavy work with gentle sustained stretches

3.5 Manual Handling Equipment

ICH recognises that while good posture and lifting techniques can reduce the risk of injuries occurring, the best option is to have equipment which reduces the risk of injury including, but not limited to:

- Chair movers
- Tables on wheels
- Trolleys
- Other equipment which minimises manual handling

3.6 Training

As most roles will involve some level of manual handling, this is mandatory training which will be covered during induction.

Manual handling may also be discussed:

- At team meetings
- During a risk assessment process for service user visits, events or activities
- During supervision

4. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed every 3 years.

This procedure remains in effect unless otherwise determined by the CEO.

5. Related Documents

Policies

ICH Risk Management Policy
ICH Workplace Health and Safety Policy

Forms

ICH Manual Handling Tasks Checklist

Sources

Safe Work Australia, 'Lifting, Pushing and Pulling (Manual Tasks)',
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/lifting-pushing-and-pulling-manual-tasks>

Health and Safety Executive, 'Manual Handling at Work',
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/manual.htm>

Better Health Channel, 'Workplace Safety – Manual Handling Injuries',
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/workplace-safety-manual-handling-injuries>