



Australian Government

Comcare

BODY STRESSING PREVENTION—TEAM TALK

Many of us are probably aware that body stressing is a common source of the aches and pain we might experience at work. Body stressing is known by a variety of names including musculoskeletal disorder, occupational overuse syndrome and repetitive strain injury. These terms have been used at various times over the years to describe overuse injuries which affect muscles, tendons and other soft tissues and is normally associated with tasks that are repetitive.

Body stressing injuries can occur from ordinary arm and hand movements such as bending, straightening, gripping, holding, twisting, clenching and reaching. Normally these common movements are not particularly harmful. What makes them hazardous at work is their continual repetition, sometimes in a forced manner, and the speed of these movements often with insufficient recovery time.

We must be mindful that body stressing injuries are associated with work tasks that include:

- > sustained or awkward body positions
- > continual, repetitive movements
- > forceful exertions
- > vibration.

For example, consider a task that exhibits concentrated movements on a small part of the body, such as the hand or wrist with a lack of sufficient recovery between movements. A task of this nature would represent a high risk for body stressing injury.

Body stressing injury risk is not only influenced by the physical nature of the task—psychosocial factors are an important source of body stressing risk. We need to be aware of:

- > task demands
- > role clarity
- > task monotony
- > job insecurity and change
- > team member and manager support.

Individual worker characteristics add a further dimension into the body stressing injury risk profile. It's important to be aware that body stressing discomfort, if not addressed in its early stage, can lead to significant injury.

Take a few minutes and complete the Comcare *Body Stressing Sources of Risk Checklist*, available on the Comcare website, to better understand the likely sources of injury risk for the work you do.

Discuss these findings with your manager and look for ways to eliminate risk at its source.

The good news is that painful body stressing injuries are avoidable if we follow a few basic steps:

1. **Identify** any body stressing sources of risk relating to your work.
2. Work with your manager to **eliminate or reduce** sources of risk.
3. **Don't ignore** any warning signs you may experience, including:
 - a. **discomfort** or **pain**, even if it disappears when away from work
 - b. feeling **overwhelmed** or **stressed**
 - c. **often tired**
 - d. **unable to concentrate**.
4. **Report** these warning signs without delay to your supervisor.

¹ *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, s27-28, 38-39, 47-49, 70-72, 144-145,