Body stressing

Body stressing involves injury to muscles, tendons, soft tissue and bones. Also known as musculoskeletal disorder, occupational overuse syndrome and repetitive strain injury, body stressing is associated with repetitive and strenuous work.

Causes of body stressing

Body stressing injuries are caused by a combination of psychosocial, physical and personal factors.

Psychosocial factors

- High or low work demands
- Low job control
- Monotonous tasks
- Poor team and manager support
- Poor relationship with manager
- Inadequate resoruces, skills and training
- Role clarity
- Job insecurity and change

Physical factors

- Sustained and awkward postures
- Repetitive movement
- Sedentary work
- Poor workstation set up
- Pushing, pulling, lifting
- Blunt force and overload

Personal factors

- Worker's ability and skills
- Personal circumstances including, stress, fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, health conditions.

Psychosocial factors

- An important deadline meant the work demands were high.
- This resulted in increased work pressure and working longer to meet the deadline.

Physical factors

- To meet the deadline, worker works longer hours and sits at the desk longer with no breaks (sedentary work).
- Sustained awkward position and repetitive mouse movement and prolonged typing.

Personal factors

- Worker is diligent and keen to achieve results.
- Worker begins to feel discomfort and then pain but ignores it to meet deadline.

Injury

- Body stressing
- Tendon/wrist damage

Preventing and managing body stressing injuries

Don't ignore discomfort or pain in yourself or a colleague.
Address body stressing early – otherwise it can lead to serious injury

1. Get to know each member of your team and check in regularly
2. Identify the psychosocial and physical factors of the work
3. Think about the job demands of your team
4. Ensure your team has the right support and resources to do their job
5. Ensure you and your team take regular breaks
6. If you notice someone showing signs of body stressing, speak up
7. Offer support and work together to find a solution

Good work design is the most effective way to eliminate hazards. Search 'Good work design' on the Comcare website to access our short videos and guidance for managers and supervisors.

Employers and employees should work together to identify, assess and control the risk.