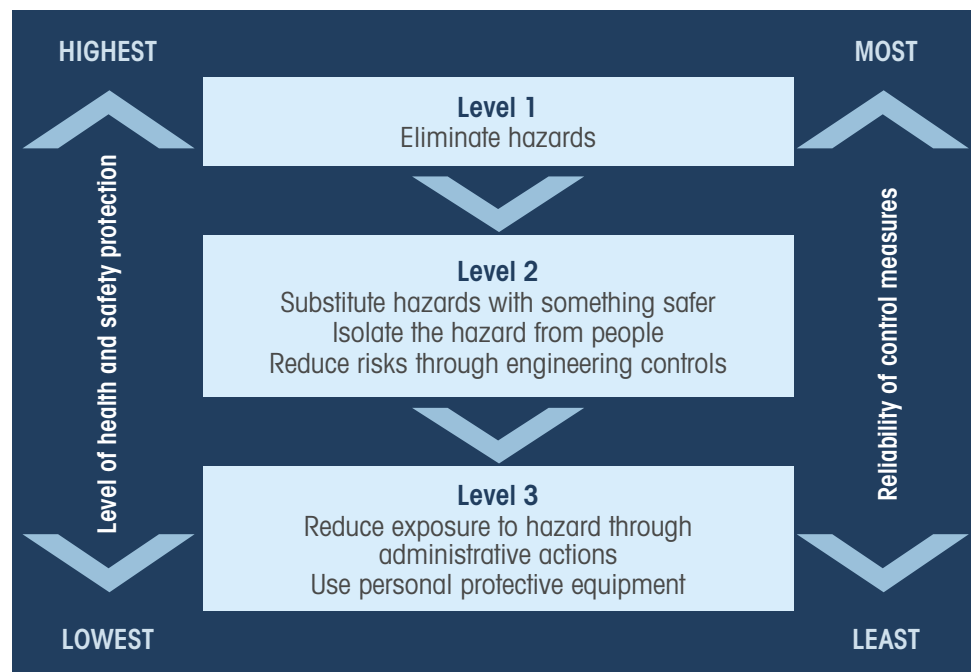


WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you've looked at the hazards that are present in the workplace, the next step is to decide on suitable controls. Always start at the top of the hierarchy of control and try wherever possible to first eliminate the hazard. If you can't eliminate the hazard, consider using a combination of controls for greater protection. Strategies at the lower end, while valuable, are less effective particularly when used in isolation.



NEED MORE INFORMATION?

See the Model Codes of Practice:

- > SafeWork Australia website: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
 - How to manage work health and safety risk
 - Hazardous manual tasks
- > Comcare website: www.comcare.gov.au
 - People at work
 - BeUpstanding
 - Body Stressing Sources of Risk Checklist



Australian Government

Comcare

BODY STRESSING: A RISK MANAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

Body stressing is a collective term covering a broad range of health problems associated with repetitive and strenuous work.

Body stressing injuries represent a significant expense within the Commonwealth jurisdiction. The average incurred cost per accepted claim (premium payers only) for body stressing rose from \$80,000 in 2014–15 to \$91,000 in 2015–16 as 34% of total claim costs.¹

Body stressing injuries at work can result from the interplay of a variety of factors. Biomechanically, soft tissue damage may occur through direct exposure (blunt trauma or sudden overload), leading to, for example, a muscle tear or sprain. Indirect exposure (repeated submaximal loading) can also lead to the experience of symptoms that, left untreated, may accumulate to cause further degeneration and injury.

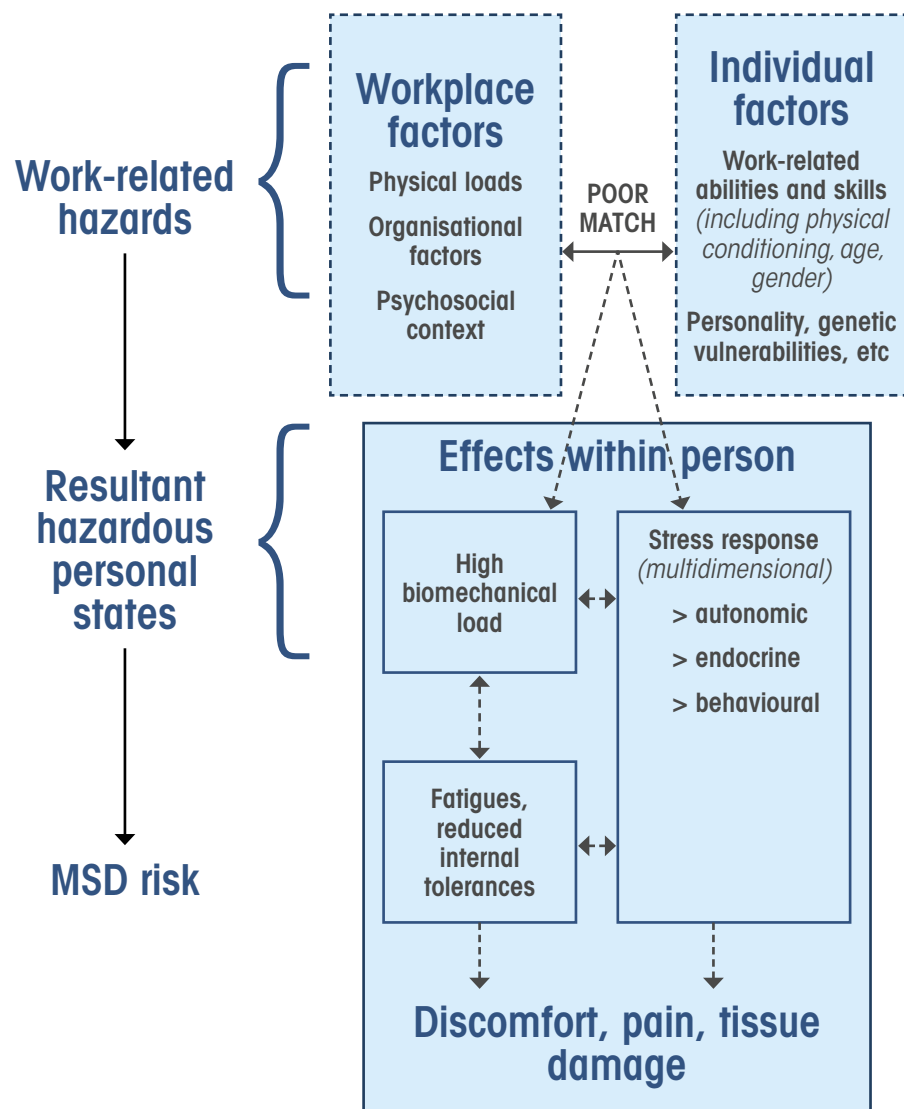
Psychosocial aspects of work such as job demands, control, support and satisfaction, imbalance between effort and reward and monotony of occupational tasks have also shown consistent associations with common musculoskeletal complaints.²

Individual worker characteristics are a critical variable in this mix.

¹ Comcare *Compendium of WHS and Workers' Compensation Statistics 2015–16*, page 20

² Vargas-Prada S, Coggon D, *Psychological and psychosocial determinants of musculoskeletal pain and associated disability, Best Practice & Research Clinical Rheumatology* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.berh.2015.03.003>.

The complex interrelationship of these variables has been represented in a simplified composite 'model of causation' for musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) risk³:



ASSESSING THE LIKELIHOOD OF A PROBLEM

A good way to assess how a body stressing hazard might escalate to a risk is to ask questions like the following:

| Questions to ask in determining likelihood | Explanation |
|---|---|
| How often are people exposed to the hazard? | A body stressing hazard may be present continuously or occasionally. It follows the more often a hazard is present, the greater the likelihood it's presence may result in harm. |
| How long might people be exposed to the hazard? | Where present, the duration a worker is exposed to the hazard, the greater the likelihood that harm may result. For example, for hazardous manual tasks, risk is increased where the task is: repetitive (performed more than twice per minute) or sustained (a posture or force held for more than 30 seconds at a time). of long duration for more than two hours in a shift or continuously for more than 30 minutes at a time. |
| How effective are current controls in reducing risk? | In most cases the risks being assessed will already be subject to some control measures. The likelihood of harm resulting from the risk will depend upon how adequate and effective the current measures are. Workers should be consulted since they are best positioned to assist in developing task-related body stressing risk control measures. |
| Could any changes in your organisation increase the likelihood? | It may be that the business cycle affects the pace or amount of work resulting in the worker feeling stressed or fatigued. Further, how is change management undertaken in the organisation and does change create increased demand of workers? Are workers consulted in matters that may affect their health and safety at work? |
| Are hazards more likely to cause harm because of the working environment? | Environmental conditions can contribute to body stressing risk, for example, work performed in high temperatures, in a confined space, with insufficient lighting or ventilation increases the potential for workers to fatigue more quickly. |
| Could the way people act and behave affect the likelihood of a hazard causing harm? | Under pressure people may make mistakes, misuse items, become distracted or panic in particular situations. The effects of fatigue or stress may make it more likely that harm will occur. |
| Do the differences between individuals in the workplace make it more likely for harm to occur? | Individual factors affect how easily or otherwise a task is for a worker to complete: age, injury history, disability, level of conditioning, lowered resilience to emotional or biomechanical task demands all impact on safe task completion. |