

PLAYING IT SAFE

Be safe and healthy on the job at with these helpful tips provided by NSM Insurance Group

Home Health Care: Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders

Helpful tips for reducing your risk of injury at work

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the leading cause of injury in the health care field, due to the physical demands put on health care professionals by client needs.

An MSD is an injury of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, joints, cartilage, bones or blood vessels in the arms, legs, head, neck or back that is caused or aggravated by work tasks such as lifting, pushing and pulling. Symptoms include pain, stiffness, swelling, numbness and tingling.

Your risk of suffering an MSD can be reduced by following these guidelines.

- Participate in ergonomic training.
- Use ergonomic assistive devices if available.
 - Products such as slip sheets, slide boards, rollers, slings, belts and mechanical or electronic hoists (to lift the client) have been designed to help health care workers and clients.
 - Equipment such as adjustable beds, raised toilet seats, shower chairs and grab bars are also helpful for reducing risk factors for musculoskeletal injuries. These types of equipment can allow the client to help during transfer.
- Use proper body mechanics. Even when assistive devices are used during client care, some amount of physical exertion may still be necessary.
 - Move along the side of the client's bed instead of reaching while performing tasks at the bedside.
 - When manually moving the client, stand as close as possible to the client without twisting your back, keeping your knees bent and feet apart. To avoid twisting your spine, make sure one foot is in the direction of the move. Using gentle rocking motions can also reduce exertion.
 - Pulling a client up in bed is easier when the head of the bed is flat or down. Raising the client's knees and encouraging the client to push (if possible) can also help.
 - Apply anti-embolism stockings by pushing them on while you are standing at the foot of the bed. You can use less force in this position than if you are standing at the side of the bed.
- Notify your employer promptly about any injury in the workplace.



Did You Know?

According to OSHA, MSDs account for almost half of the injuries and illnesses reported for nurses and nursing support staff, including home care workers.

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