



Risk factors

What is a risk factor?

A risk factor is something that increases the likelihood of an injury occurring.

What are the common sources of risk?

Manual task risk factors can come from various sources and can include:

- work area design and lay-out e.g. inadequate space when fitting pipes under sink bench;
- the item, equipment or tool e.g. poorly designed fittings;
- the load e.g. heavy toilet bowl;
- the working environment e.g. sandy ground and cool temperatures; and
- systems of work, work organisation and work practices e.g. other trades working in the same area.



Indirect risk factors that can make the task more difficult to perform include:

- Working environment e.g. poor lighting and cool temperatures.
- Systems of work, work organisation and work practices e.g. inadequate rest breaks and unfamiliarity with the task.
- Worker characteristics e.g. physical limitations due to previous injury.

The overall risk of developing a musculoskeletal disorder will increase if:

- a direct risk factor level is high e.g. high forces are required to lift an object;
- the task involves being exposed to more than one direct risk factor e.g. lifting heavy loads in awkward postures;
- indirect risk factors are present and interact within a task e.g. lifting loads in awkward postures in a cool environment; and
- if there are several hazardous manual tasks that a worker does as part of their job.