

Volunteering - Keeping Safe

Manual handling

Manual handling is the transportation or supporting of a load by hand or bodily force including, lifting, lowering, holding, carrying, pushing, pulling and throwing.

Potential harms

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are injuries and disorders that affect the human body's movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.). Pain is the most common symptom. Sometimes the sufferer also has joint stiffness, muscle tightness, redness and swelling of the affected area. MSDs may progress in stages from mild to severe.

MSD's can be caused by:

- Repetitive and/or heavy lifting
- Bending and twisting
- Repeating an action frequently
- Uncomfortable working position
- Exerting too much force
- Working too long without a break

Best practice and controls

Many factors affect our capabilities with regards to how much weight/how often we can handle a load, including our health, gender, bodily strength and existing conditions so it is very important that you recognise your own capabilities and only undertake manual handling activities within these. Therefore, before you undertake any manual handling, you should first think about it to make sure that you are physically capable. Do not undertake any manual handling if you have an existing muscular-skeletal problem i.e. bad back, shoulder, arm etc.

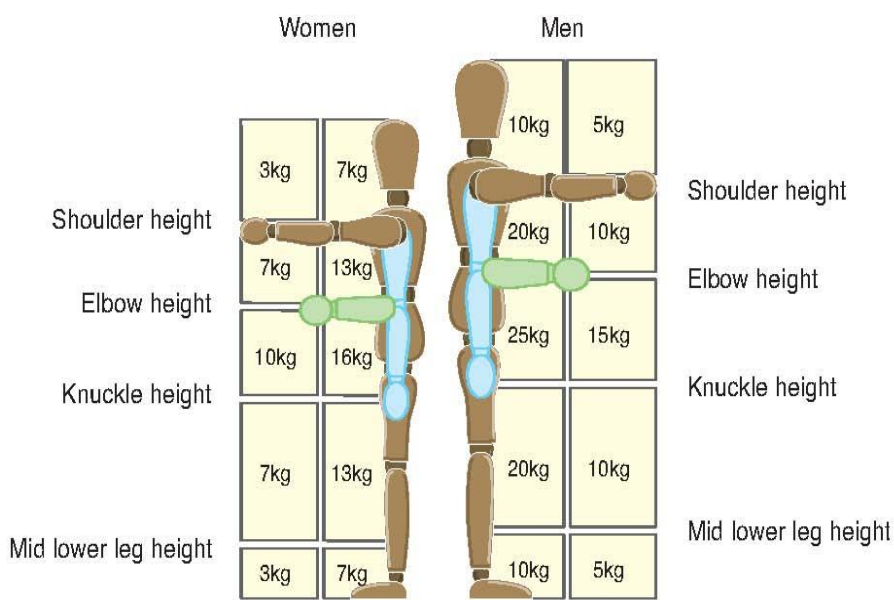
If you have any concerns with the manual handling tasks associated with your activities, you should discuss this with your Guide Dogs manager.

General advice on manual handling

- Always use mechanical aids where possible, for example trolleys, bags with wheels etc.
- Limit the number of times you carry out the same manual handling activity
- Always seek help if you need it
- Report any injury or problems as soon as possible to your GP

Guidance weights

There is no such thing as a “completely safe” manual handling operation, but the health and safety executive (HSE) has issued the following guidelines on levels of loads that are unlikely to pose hazards for most people.



These weights are NOT what HSE say people must lift but loads which are unlikely to cause the average person harm. These figures assume that the load can be gripped with both hands, lifting is infrequent, the person is in good health and of average strength and build and there is no twisting.

Good handling technique for lifting

Stop and think - plan the lift

- Where is the load to be placed?
- Do you need help with the load?
- Use appropriate handling aids if possible
- Remove obstructions from your route
- Is there a long distance to travel? Consider resting the load mid-way on a table or bench in order to change grip

The following description of good manual handling technique is represented by drawings on the right of each step.

Position the feet

- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward to maintain balance



Adopt a good posture

- At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting)



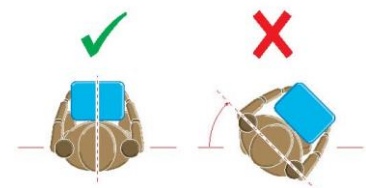
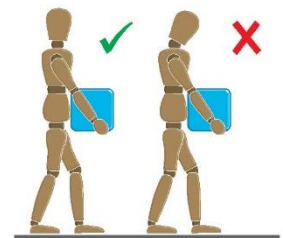
Get a firm grip

- Try to keep the arms within the boundary formed by the legs. The best position and type of grip depends on the circumstances and individual preference; but it must be secure. A hook grip is less tiring than keeping the fingers straight. If you need to vary the grip as the lift proceeds, do it as smoothly as possible



Lifting and moving

- Try not to flex the back any further while lifting
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways
- Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips
- Turn by moving the feet not the body
- Keep your head up when handling
- Move smoothly, try not to jerk
- Keep the load close to the trunk of your body for as long as possible
- Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the trunk



- If a close approach to the load is not possible, slide it towards you before trying to lift

Put down and then adjust

- If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first then slide it into the desired position



Good handling technique for pushing and pulling

To make it easier to push or pull, you should keep your feet well away from the load and go no faster than walking speed.

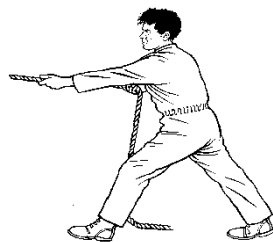
Lifting may be replaced by controlled pushing or pulling in certain cases, such as sliding or rolling an object along. However uncontrolled sliding or rolling, particularly of large or heavy loads, may introduce additional risks thus increasing the risk of injury.

For both pulling and pushing a secure footing is necessary and the hands need to be applied to the load between waist and shoulder height wherever possible.

Pulling

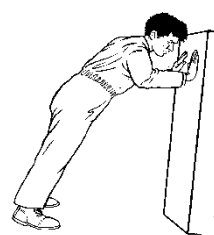


Wrong

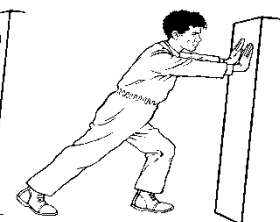


Right

Pushing



Wrong



Right

Mechanical handling

Mechanical assistance involves the use of handling aids - an element of manual handling is retained but bodily forces are applied more efficiently, reducing the risk of injury.

A trolley, sack truck or roll conveyor can greatly reduce the effort required to move a load horizontally.

Handling devices such as hand-held hooks can simplify the problem of handling a load that is difficult to grasp.



Aids such as trolleys should have handle heights that are between the shoulder and waist. Devices should be well maintained and comply with any relevant standards, with wheels that run smoothly.

Lifting dogs

Before handling or lifting a dog, it is essential to assess the task and consider the following:

- The reasons for/against lifting, handling, or carrying
- The size and weight of the dog/puppy and the nature of its medical needs
- The distance and ground to be covered
- The capabilities of yourself and/or your helpers
- Any form of transport available

You may have to lift a dog for several reasons but, if you do, there is a real risk of hurting the dog and/or injuring yourself. Ensuring the safety of yourself and the dog must be your first concern:

- Do not endanger yourself
- Do not move a dog on your own if help is available
- Do use the correct lifting technique (below)
- Do give verbal commands to your helpers and work in unison

Whenever you lift anything (not just a dog) it is important to think of your own safety.

It is important not to attempt to lift a dog which is too heavy for you, so the following methods should be used. Always remember to adopt the best practice lifting techniques.

Dogs should always be encouraged to jump, use stairs or ramps but there will be times where there may be a need to lift a dog and it is important that it is done in a way to limit the risk of injury to you or the dog.

Dog lifting methods

One person lifting a small dog or puppy

Place one arm under and around dog's neck, the other arm is placed under the dog's rump (ensure arm is over tail).

Two person lifting larger adult dog

- First person at the shoulder, with one arm curled around the dog's neck, holding the dog's head against the handler's shoulder to control it, second arm passes under the thorax just behind front legs
- Second person stands at the hindquarters, places one arm under the abdomen, just in front of hind legs, second arm passes around the pelvis, over the tail, a third person can support the back
- Communicate and lift together so the weight of the dog is distributed evenly

What can you do if you sustain an MSD?

Most pain comes from the irritation of chemicals released by the inflammatory process following injury and is often disproportionate to the actual injury that has occurred.

Use an ice pack over the injured area for approximately 15 minutes even if there is no visible swelling. In the first 48 hours repeat this several times a day and continue using ice packs at least once a day while the pain persists. For back and neck injury heat may be used instead of ice to reduce muscle spasm.

Try to modify your activities to relatively rest the injured area but it is important that you keep gently moving the injured area within your limits of pain.

Anti-inflammatories will reduce the inflammatory response thereby reducing the pain, whereas painkillers dampen down the pain response to normal movements allowing you to move more normally. Taking

anti-inflammatories and/or painkillers regularly after injury will often speed up your recovery. Painkillers and anti-inflammatories will not mask harmful pain. Before taking medications please consult a pharmacist or GP.

If your pain does not ease over a few days, you should consult your GP for better pain management or further assessment of your injury. Most musculoskeletal injuries will gradually resolve within 6 weeks.

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