

Musculoskeletal disorders



Signposting material for GB food and drink manufacturing industries

Introduction

The **Food and Drink Manufacture Forum (FDMF)** which is a partnership between Trade Associations, Trade Unions and HSE. The FDMF's five-year **Common Strategy** aims to encourage Great Britain's (GB) food and drink manufacture sector to improve its health and safety performance. One Strategy objective is the effective management of risks associated with work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), by member companies.

In an FDMF survey in 2019, 52% of respondents said that MSD risks gave them the cause of greatest concern in respect of health risks within their organisations. Higher than expected numbers of respondents had either not used or were not aware of tools to help them assess MSDs.

This document has been developed by the FDMF with the aim of simply signposting employers and their health and safety representatives, in the food and drink manufacturing sector, to sources of HSE and FDMF member information which will help companies to assess and control the risk of MSDs.

MSD risks across Great Britain's food and drink manufacturing sector

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are one of the most common types of work-related illness with an estimated 4,000 workers suffering each year (Labour Force Survey). Each year around 9,000 workers in the sector sustain an injury at work (Labour Force Survey). Injury notifications from employers suggest that handling injuries are the second most common kind of injury within the sector, accounting for around 20% of all reported injuries to employees (RIDDOR).

The risk of damage to muscles and joints is not confined to certain industries or types of people within the sector. Most musculoskeletal injuries arise from these causes:

- packing products (such as cheese, confectionery and biscuits)
- handling containers (such as boxes, crates, sacks, casks, kegs)
- pushing wheeled racks (such as oven racks and trolleys of produce)
- cutting, boning, jointing, trussing and evisceration (such as meat and poultry)

Toolkits

There are four MSD toolkits that can be used to identify and assess high-risk tasks. These are:

- Manual handling assessment charts ([the Mac tool](#))
- Variable manual handling assessment charts ([the VMAC tool](#))
- Assessment of repetitive tasks of the upper limbs ([the ART tool](#))
- Risk assessment of pushing and pulling ([the RAPP tool](#))

Guides on how to reduce or avoid MSD risks

There are a range of such guides published. These include:

- [Manual handling solutions for the food and drink industries](#)
- [A recipe for safety: Health and safety in food and drink manufacture](#)
- [Manual handling at work](#)
- [Making the best use of lifting and handling aids](#)
- [Upper limb disorders in the workplace](#)

Industry case studies

The HSE web page [Case Studies](#) includes examples of where businesses, affiliated to FDMF members, have successfully tackled MSD problems; thus creating positive outcomes for the businesses and their workers.

Regulations

The main regulations and related guidance are also on the HSE site. These are the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 and for guidance on the regulations [download here](#).

Other useful sources

The HSE web page [Getting help with manual handling risks in your business](#) describes the different kinds of help that employers may need (e.g. assessment, training etc.) and gives examples of how these have been implemented in practice.

The HSE has a “[Go Home Healthy](#)” campaign website which includes material on MSDs.

To keep up to date with developments in health and safety you can subscribe to [HSE eBulletins](#).