

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Health and community services

These are the most common injuries to workers in the health and community services industry based on accepted workers' compensation claims.

* The health and community services industry covers hospitals, nursing homes, childcare services, education (preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education) police, fire brigade and corrective services, and government administration.

Psychological system

Anxiety, depression, work-related stress from work pressures

5%

Neck

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from handling or moving people

5%

Shoulder

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from handling or moving people

9%

Hands and fingers

Wounds/lacerations from using knives

12%

Back

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from handling or moving people

23%

Knee

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from turning, bending, twisting or walking

8%

Wrist

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from handling or moving people

4%

Foot and toes

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from walking up or down steps/stairways, stepping on or off things, or walking

3%

Ankle

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from falling on poor or uneven ground surfaces

5%

Source: Queensland Employee Injury Database. Data current as at October 2008 and is subject to change over time. Based on accepted workers' compensation claims, excluding commuting claims, between 2000-01 and 2007-08.

Health and safety tips

Employers should undertake a risk management process in order to protect workers by preventing or minimising the risk of injuries in their workplace. Below are some health and safety tips to reduce the risk of injury. Employers should work with their employees to ensure the most effective solutions are put in place.

Manual tasks	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">For work involving hard physical effort:<ul style="list-style-type: none">organise work to reduce the physical force needed to lift, carry, move, hold or restrain items by positioning items as close as possible to where work is doneprovide, use and maintain adequate mechanical and assistive devices (such as trolleys, hoists, wheelchairs) to minimise efforttrain workers in safe use of equipment/devices, where providedwhere possible, make sure flooring does not impede the use of wheeled equipmentFor work involving awkward working positions, workers should:<ul style="list-style-type: none">work in the straightest forward facing positionwork with their arms close to their body, not reaching away or overhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">vary their position frequently and not stand, sit, kneel or squat for long periodsminimise bending and over reaching by, for example, adjusting working platforms for different working heights, and storing frequently used items between hip and shoulder heightFor work that is highly repetitive or involves tasks of long duration, workers should:<ul style="list-style-type: none">work at a slower pace for tasks repeated frequently or done for long periodsvary work duties or working positions for example, alternate between standing and sitting activitieschange work practices or obtain equipment to avoid repetitive actions or prolonged tasks.Make sure all workers have received clear instructions and have been trained to perform the task safely.
Slips, trips and falls	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clean up contaminants and spills on the floor promptlyUse slip-resistant flooring in areas likely to become wet or contaminatedEnsure regular and adequate cleaning of floorsMake sure working areas are kept clear and tidyMake sure walkways are adequately lit and clear of clutter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintain floor surfaces in a good order (e.g. free from holes, curled carpet edges etc)Consider the physical characteristics of people and the activity being undertakenMake sure footwear is suitable for the type of work and work environment.
Occupational stress	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assign appropriate amounts of work to workersMonitor work demands and control over workProvide support systems for talking about difficult situations at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide clear work structures, particularly through times of changeProvide recognition and reward to workers.
Knives, sharp tools and personal protective equipment (PPE)	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Knives should be sharp and maintained in good working conditionProvide the correct knife/sharp for the taskTrain and instruct your workers about using and sharpening knivesEnsure steels for knife sharpening have hand guardsProvide knives with handles that are comfortable to useProvide accessible first aid equipment and trained first aid officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Select appropriate PPE for the work to be performed (e.g. gloves, aprons, protective footwear, hearing protection, respirators and masks, safety or sun glasses, hats and trousers)Use PPE in accordance with the manufacturer's instructionsEnsure all workers wear PPE if supplied and instructed in its proper use.
Young workers	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider the special characteristics of children and young workers at the workplaceUnderstand that younger workers are still physically growing and may also lack understanding, experience and/or confidence in performing their duties safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Induct, train and place younger workers with a suitable mentor to demonstrate and reinforce sound and safe work practices.