



Facilitator guidance



The purpose of this **'Understanding Musculoskeletal Disorders'** toolkit is to enable organisations to use Napo films to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable working lives within groups of their own staff and their supply chains. Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are one of the most common work-related health problems in Europe, affecting millions of workers, at some point

in their life as many as 90 percent of people will suffer from back pain, upper limb disorders and repetitive strain injuries. This toolkit will assist individuals and organisations to consider MSDs from every aspect of a worker's life and develop whole solutions for their organisations, which will reduce the impact of MSDs providing fulfilled working lives for individuals, their families and communities.

The hazards and risks associated with musculoskeletal disorders are recognised across Europe, and subject to regulatory control. The central message from 'Understanding Musculoskeletal Disorders' is that hazardous manual handling operations and tasks involving significant physical effort, repetitive movement and poor physical posture should be avoided.

Where avoidance is not possible, risks must be assessed and control measures put in place that reduce the risk of MSDs.

Prior to using this toolkit organisations should have:

- Considered MSD related hazards and risks that workers may encounter during the course of their working day;

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- Considered control measures and put in place policies and procedures to minimise the risk.

The series of exercises within the toolkit are designed to encourage consideration of a range of potentially hazardous elements of manual handling tasks, repetitive work tasks or awkward postures. Participants should be encouraged to think more widely than the 'mechanical' approach to manual handling or repetitive work where the worker is simply part of a task and extend this to consideration of the impact of physical and mental wellbeing. By doing this, participants will be contributing to the promotion of sustainable working lives.

The toolkit will enable organisations to deliver MSD-related advice, and will help generate discussion relating to generic risks involved in moving and handling, repetitive work or awkward postures within the workplace, this can be used to inform and convey company policy. The conversation can be extended to the value of encouraging the transfer of lessons learned within the controlled environment of the workplace to activities out of work towards lives free from serious accidental injuries linked to moving and handling poor posture or lack of physical exercise. Leading to an improvement in the overall safety culture of the organisation and contributing to a reduction in MSD related absence across Europe.

Further information on MSDs: At these links you will find simple explanatory information about MSDs and their prevention which can help you prepare the activities or the factsheets be used as handouts for participants.

- Healthy workers, thriving companies-a practical guide to wellbeing at work, tackling psychosocial risks and musculoskeletal disorders in small businesses. EU-OSHA 2018 <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/healthy-workers-thriving-companies-practical-guide-wellbeing/view>
- EU-OSHA web pages on MSDs <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/musculoskeletal-disorders>
- Factsheet 71 - Introduction to work-related musculoskeletal disorders <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/factsheets/71/view>

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- Factsheet 72 - Work-related neck and upper limb disorders
<https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/factsheets/72/view>
- Factsheet 73 - Hazards and risks associated with manual handling of loads in the workplace <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/factsheets/73/view>
- Factsheet 87 - Workforce diversity and risk assessment: ensuring everyone is covered Summary of an Agency report
<https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/factsheets/87/view>

Further training resources

Conversation starters...

Introduction to activities

Good quality work is good for you, and worklessness a determinant of poor health. Sustainable organisations understand this and work towards creating environments and cultures where, workers are valued, and their voices heard, that are safe and secure, where the 'whole' person is considered and fulfilling work provided.

The idea is to create sustainable work which promotes workers' safety and health throughout their working lives and into retirement. Sustainability is therefore a concept that extends to individual workers, where the design of working environments does not account for workers needs there can be a negative impact on both their physical and mental health.

'Understanding Musculoskeletal Disorders' provides a menu of activities, which can be used to lead conversations about the issues related to manual handling, repetitive work and poor posture and the potential to develop MSDs as highlighted in each short film.

The focus of these activities is the impact of inadequate working conditions on workers' health and the potential development of MSDs. These materials also facilitate conversations between employers, workers, safety representatives and advisers that encourage the sharing of experience of MSDs and the negative impact they have on life outside work.

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The activities use scenes from the Napo films 'Napo in ...back to a healthy future' and 'Napo in lighten the load'. Each of the short scenes taken from the films encourages a conversation about a specific scenario highlighting the potential for workers to develop MSDs.

How to use 'Understanding Musculoskeletal Disorders'

The toolkit can be used as part of an induction programme, to support workplace campaigns, to reduce absenteeism or as part of a return to work programme. The individual activities can also be used in workplace discussions, toolbox talks etc.

The facilitator should be familiar with the:

- Types of MSD-related hazards and risks that workers may encounter during the course of their working day.
- Control measures that should be in place to minimise the risk of MSDs
- Organisational policy and procedure relating to the prevention of MSDs including safe manual handling and any other physically demanding task
- The need for early symptom reporting by individual workers and the routes available for this in their organisation.

Based on this understanding the facilitator selects the most appropriate Napo clip and related activity from the menu.

The suggested duration of an activity is 30 minutes, based on a short introduction from the facilitator then showing the Napo clip.

The facilitator then uses the question sets linked to each activity to engage the participants in a conversation about the issues raised in the clip. Different questions are suggested depending on the group of participants (workers (w), supervisors (s), managers (m)).

The facilitator then shows the clip again to allow for reflection and closes with concluding questions that allows an assessment of participant understanding to be made.

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Activities can be used individually or combined according to theme which can extend the training session depending on the needs of participants and the organisation itself. See the menu of activities for proposals for combining individual activities together. They can also be used together with another set of workplace discussion activities produced by EU-OSHA - 'conversation starters'.