



Manual Tasks Policy

1. Purpose

WA County Health Service (WACHS) is committed to the provision of a safe work environment, in accordance with the [Work Health Safety Act 2020](#) (WHS Act). As part of this approach all hazardous manual tasks across WACHS are assessed, eliminated if possible or modified where practicable to reduce the risk of injury.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirements of WACHS with respect to the prevention and control of manual task hazards in the workplace.

2. Policy

All manual tasks across WACHS are assessed, eliminated if possible or modified where practicable to reduce the risk of injury.

The aim is to enhance existing work practices, reduce the chance of injuries and illnesses, and ensure efficient allocation of resources for manual tasks, including materials and patient handling.

2.1 Risk Identification

Hazardous tasks may be identified through Duty Statements:

- review of incident/ injury statistics, and/or informal reporting. Injuries arising from manual tasks in WACHS have most frequently included (also refer to [Appendix A](#)):
 - pushing/pulling loads
 - lifting/carrying loads
 - static holding of patient limbs/head
 - assisting a person who has fallen
 - attempting to assist a falling patient or
 - repositioning/transferring patients
- consulting with workers, managers / supervisors, Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), Work Health and Safety (WHS) departments where available regarding any manual tasks that:
 - may lead to physical strain or are associated with discomfort, pain, numbness or tingling
 - are difficult or problematic when performed
 - are physically demanding (e.g., require more than one person or a strong person to do the task)
 - are of long duration and high intensity (e.g., data entry with short deadlines) or
 - require workers to work with equipment that's faulty and/or not fit for purpose.
- collecting information and identifying any trends such as occupations, certain jobs, workgroups or locations, types of injuries and worker characteristics
- observing work being performed and undertaking workplace inspections
- application of minimal manual task principles.

2.2 Risk Assessment

This process should be completed in accordance with the [Code of practice - Hazardous Manual Tasks](#) and the [National Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks](#).

Risk Assessment include:

- [WACHS Manual Task Risk Assessment Form](#)
- [WACHS Risk Assessment for Admission of the Heavier Patient Policy](#)
- [WACHS Risk Assessment for Admission of the Heavier Patient Site Assessment Form](#)
- risk assessment is to involve consultation between workers who perform the task, their managers / supervisors, HSRs
- WHS Consultants may assist, depending on the extent of the task and severity of risk.

2.3 Risk Control

Once manual task risks have been assessed, it is necessary to eliminate, if practicable, or minimise the risk by introducing appropriate hazard risk controls, substituting the task or altering the source of the risk.

Managers / supervisors are responsible to implement control measures that reduce the risk of manual tasks hazards. The following strategies maybe used, as appropriate:

- plan and prepare to perform the task safely before commencing
- use appropriate equipment to assist with the task e.g., trolleys, slide sheets, hover matt, hover jack and mechanical hoists for general loads and patient handling
- obtain assistance of other people if needed
- apply safe techniques and postures as advised by the manual tasks trainer
- define who is to lead the task if more than one person is involved
- communicate well with others involved in the task for the period of the task
- determine training and education needs of workers with regards to the hazards and/or appropriate techniques to reduce the risk of injury
- ensure relevant training is provided and maintained for all workers to ensure they are able to apply safe work practices
- redesign or modify the workplace, plant, equipment (e.g., containers used), systems of work or environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, ventilation, glare, lighting, noise).

2.4 Mandatory Training:

- All WACHS workers are required to complete the Manual Tasks Theory Education through the [WACHS MyLearning Learning Management System](#) (LMS).
- Practical training relevant to occupations and positions will be provided through WACHS Induction and additional training modules through the LMS.
- Ongoing training and competency assessment must be relevant to work duties and undertaken annually according to workplace duties.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

All **Managers / Supervisors** are responsible:

- to provide safety leadership
- implement and maintain safe work practices
- ensure suitable Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) is available for use
- ensure workers have completed mandatory manual handling training
- implement control measures to eliminate and or minimise the risk of manual task injuries as per the [Code of practice - Hazardous Manual Tasks](#)
- ensure suitable manual task equipment is available (e.g., patient hoists, bariatric beds, chairs, wheelchairs etc) and maintained for safe use (as detailed by the manufacturer)
- ensure evaluation and trial of new equipment occurs before purchase, as per product evaluation procedures to ensure manual tasks and other WHS risks are assessed - this should be undertaken through the Regional Product Evaluation and Standardisation Committees:
 - refer to [Clinical Product Evaluation Policy](#) and [Clinical Products Complaints Policy](#)
 - consult with WHS before purchase of manual task equipment
- investigation of reported hazards and incidents and implementation of corrective actions as per [Hazard/Incident Management Procedure](#) and completion of a WACHS [Manual Tasks Investigation Checklist](#).

The **WHS Consultants** are to:

- provide assistance and advice on manual task hazard management
- promote understanding of manual task hazard management to managers and workers
- internal auditing and review of manual task practices and procedures.

All **WACHS workers** are responsible for the following:

- follow safe work practices, giving due consideration for the safety of themselves, fellow workers, patients and / or visitors
- complete mandatory manual task training
- comply with manual task policies and procedures including use of correct equipment and PPE
- report all manual task hazards and incidents to your manager / supervisor via a Safety Risk Report Form (SRRF)
- applying a risk assessment approach to all manual tasks.

All **staff** are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Monitoring

Monitoring controls ensures effectiveness, and any further hazards that arise are identified and will be managed appropriately by Regional WHS teams.

4.2 Evaluation

Evaluation may be undertaken in a variety of ways and following certain events:

- risk controls are to be reviewed and evaluated to ensure they are effective and working appropriately
- regular reviews should be undertaken to identify any new hazardous manual tasks in the workplace and to assess whether there have been any changes to the way current tasks are carried out
- where pattern of incidents have occurred over time, a review must be undertaken, risks identified, assessed and controls reviewed
- following implementation of new equipment or procedures and / or as part of any quality improvement initiative.

5. Compliance

This policy is a mandatory requirement under the [Work Health Safety Act 2020](#).

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to Section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) and is binding on all WACHS workers which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency workers) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS workers are reminded that compliance with all policies and procedures is mandatory.

6. References

WACHS [Occupational Safety and Health Statement of Commitment](#)
[Code of practice - Hazardous Manual Tasks](#)
[Code of Practice – How to manage Work Health and Safety Risks \(2011\)](#)
[Code of Practice – Occupational Safety and Health in the Western Australian Public Sector 2007](#)

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Manual Tasks	<p>Refers to any activity or sequence of activities that requires a person to use their physical body (musculoskeletal system) to perform work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manual handling (use of force to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or object) • performing repetitive actions • adopting awkward or sustained postures • using plant, tools or equipment that exposes workers to vibration • manual tasks involving the handling of unstable or unbalanced loads or loads difficult to grasp or hold.
Activity	Refers to the movements or postures adopted at any given time in order to perform a manual task.
Hazard	Anything that may result in injury or harm to the health of a person: Manual tasks that have the potential to cause injury or harm/are referred to in this policy as hazardous manual tasks.
Musculoskeletal disorder	An injury or disease of the musculoskeletal system.
Risk	In relation to any injury or harm, means the probability of that injury or harm occurring.
Duty Statement	A clear outline of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position.

8. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS wide
Audience	All workers
Records Management	Non Clinical: Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy
Related Legislation	Work Health Safety Act 2020 Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 Workers' Compensations and Injury Management Act 1981
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP 0007/16 WA Health Compliance Management Policy • Risk, Compliance and Audit Framework • Work Health and Safety Framework
Related WACHS Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazard Incident Management Procedure • Management of Elective Surgical and Obstetric Patients with an Elevated Body Mass Index Procedure • Occupational Safety and Health Policy • Risk Assessment for the Admission of the Heavier Patient Policy
Other Related Documents	Nil
Related Forms	WACHS Safety Risk Report Form WACHS Risk Assessment for Admission of the Heavier Patient Site Assessment Form WACHS Manual Task Risk Assessment Form WACHS Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist WACHS Manual Tasks Investigation Checklist
Related Training Packages	Manual Handling (MHG EL2)
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 2709
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	1.29, 1.30, 1.31, 1.32, 1.33
Aged Care Quality Standards	5 (3) (b) i)
National Standards for Mental Health Services	2.9

9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
1.01	4 December 2023	17 November 2021	Minor review including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> legislative updates in line with the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 introducing the Manual Tasks Investigation Checklist general review of document and updated to new template
1.02	12 March 2025	17 November 2021	Minor amendment to replace link to Safety Risk Report Form.

10. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director People Capability Culture
Co-approver	Nil
Contact	Director Work Health Safety Wellbeing
Business Unit	Work Health and Safety
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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Appendix A: Frequent Manual Handling Tasks

Source of Risk	Tasks	Suggested Control
Patient Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repetitive / sustained / awkward tasks • transfer / mobilise Patient • lateral transfers • reposition patient • falling patient • fallen patient • sudden movement • lifting child • heavier patients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use assistive equipment e.g., slide sheets, hoists, Hover Jack / Matt • obtain assistance of another person • apply safe techniques and postures.
General Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lift/lower/carry load • push/pull • repetitive / sustained / awkward tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use trolleys • push rather than pull • rotate tasks and people between different tasks • reduce weight of items stored / handled e.g., chemical containers • review stored items to ensure stored at appropriate heights.
Computer Ergonomics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustained or awkward postures. • repetitive movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct workstation set up • alternate between sitting and standing tasks • frequent pause breaks • education on workstation and office safety • workstation assessments.