

SECTION 6

MANUAL HANDLING

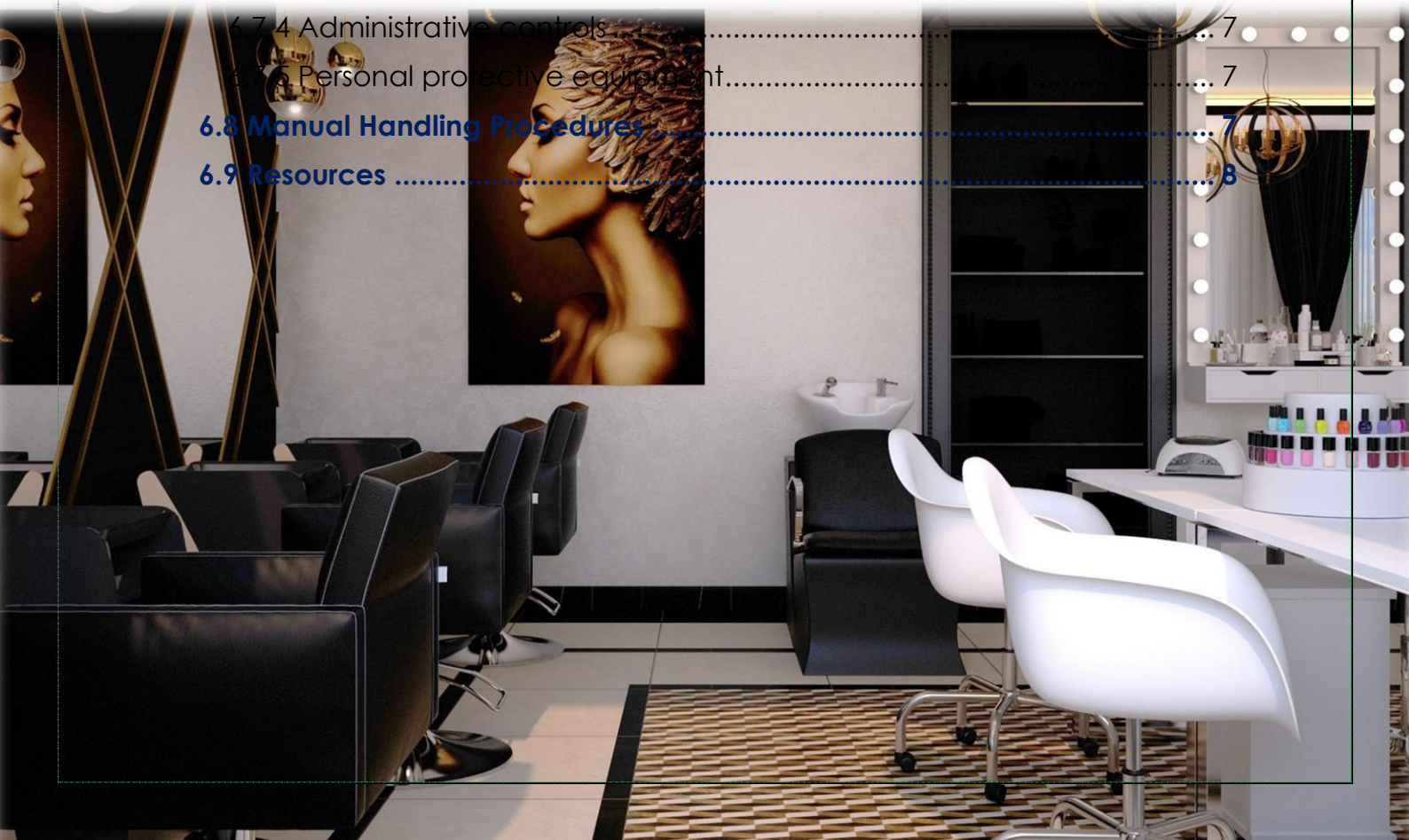


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SECTION 6 - MANUAL HANDLING

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6.2 What is manual handling?

Manual handling injuries are the second largest cause of injuries in the workplace.

Those working in the hair industry do a lot of manual handling.

MANUAL HANDLING

Manual Handling is any activity that includes lifting or putting down, pulling or pushing, carrying, supporting or moving

Manual Handling is **any** activity that includes lifting or putting down, pulling or pushing, carrying, supporting or moving an object, person or animal using the hand or any other part of the body. That includes any time you pick up a shampoo bottle, or even your client's lock of hair.

6.3 What is a hazardous manual handling task?

Obviously, the two examples above are not hazardous tasks. But what if you had to shift a whole box full of shampoo, for instance? That would be a different matter.

A hazardous manual handling task is a task that requires a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing involving one or more of the following:

- repetitive or sustained force e.g. using equipment
- high or sudden force e.g. fall wet floor
- repetitive movement e.g. blow-drying or cutting
- sustained or awkward posture e.g. applying colours
- exposure to vibration e.g. holding a blow-dryer or clippers

These five factors are also known as the characteristics of a hazardous manual task.

6.4 How do manual handling injuries occur?

Injuries from manual tasks result from ongoing wear and tear to the joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and discs. Although less common, injuries can be caused by a one-off overload situation.

Over a period of time, damage can gradually build up through:

- holding fixed positions for a prolonged time
- performing repetitive movements that are fast and/or involve a lot of muscular effort

If insufficient breaks are taken, muscle fatigue can lead to inflammation and tissue damage. Injury is more likely to occur when this happens repeatedly.

6.5 What are the risk factors?

Risk factors are part of the demands of a job that affect the worker and can contribute to injury. These are set out in the table below.

Risk Factors	Prevention Tips
Working postures Awkward postures require greater muscular effort and lead to greater fatigue, particularly when holding a position for a long time	To maintain a healthy body, avoid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø bending or twisting your back during a task e.g. washing hair Ø having your neck bent forward or twisted, e.g. applying colour Ø keeping your shoulders raised during work Ø having the upper arms held out to the sides and away from the body e.g. cutting hair
Repetition and duration Continually repeating a movement, particularly with a forceful exertion increases the risk of injury. Long durations of awkward postures or repetitive work are also a risk.	Ensure you have adequate breaks or job changes when working in high risk areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø rolling hair Ø prolonged sitting or standing Ø prolonged bending or leaning, e.g. electrolysis Ø applying colour Ø cutting and blow drying
Work area design The work area design and layout may require workers to	Before commencing work consider the following in your workspace:

bend or reach to perform tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø equipment and materials not located close to the worker causing workers to bend, reach or twist Ø non-adjustable chairs, benches and massage beds Ø work surfaces too high or too low
Use of tools Poor design and excessive use of hand tools contributes to disorders of the wrist, elbow and shoulder.	Scenarios to assess and manage include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø working with heavy tools e.g. blow dryers Ø difficult or awkward hand grips Ø vibrating tools e.g. blow dryers Ø incorrect choice of scissors for an individual's needs
Load handling Supporting a weight while holding arms away from the body increases stress to the back and shoulders.	Scenarios to assess and manage include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø working with heavy tools e.g. holding a blow dryer away from the body Ø holding a body part while cutting Ø carrying heavy boxes of product to storage areas

6.6 Manual handling hazards specific to the hair industry

There are a number of manual handling issues that have adverse effects in the hair industry. These are lower back injuries, shoulder and neck pain, carpal tunnel issues, elbow pain and upper back pain.

Many of these can be avoided by some simple steps.

- Standing on a hard concrete floor for long periods puts undue stress through your feet, knees, and back
- Lower body problems run from achy joints to varicose veins
 - To counteract this, use a rubber anti-fatigue mat to add some needed cushion
 - Saddle chair stools are a good way to do this as well. These chairs will decrease stress to your legs and back while still allowing you to move nimbly.
- Most of us favour one leg and bear the majority of the weight through one side
 - This is risky for your body. Using supportive shoes also helps. These should lace up, have non-slip soles, and provide some cushion

- Bending over to shampoo is a typical cause of low back pain
 - Spread your feet apart and bend at the knees while keeping your back straight. Another option is to put one foot forward of the other shoulder width apart and bend at the hips and knees, again keeping the back straight
- When cutting hair be sure to adjust the chair height so you are not bending over.
 - Keeping your arms elevated in front of you for long periods creates problems in the neck, arms, and back.
- Your body is not designed to maintain these static postures for long periods. The resulting muscle strain, knots in the muscles, and pinched nerves cause pain, numbness, tingling, and heaviness in the arms
 - Keep your elbows close to your sides as much as possible. Stretch your neck, arms, and back between clients. Keeping yourself limber and strong is a necessity. Establish and maintain a regular stretching and strengthening program
- Be more aware of your body positions
 - Use the mirror to watch yourself and see unnecessary neck bending forward or to the sides. Keep your ears over your shoulders. Look with your eyes not your neck
- Tendonitis of the thumb or forearm muscles is common
 - One way to deal with this is to use proper scissors. Keep the blades sharp to minimize the force needed, while this may seem a small detail consider the millions of cuts you make! Trying to keep the wrists relatively straight and avoid awkward positions that bend your wrists up or down excessively is the most important consideration. Swivel-thumb scissors allow you to minimize awkward strenuous positioning of the wrist and thumb. Also, become aware of the tension in your forearms. Work with the arms as relaxed as possible
- Use ergonomic rests that are made from materials that do not harbour dust or bacteria as forearm rests or use rolled foam pads or towels that can be laundered. This removes the issue of coming into contact with hard surfaces and potentially damaging the nerves in the forearm. Use safety glasses or magnifying lenses to reduce your need to bend over the client.

6.7 Control measures

- Vary tasks frequently to give wrists, shoulders or backs a rest
- Alternate between sitting and standing when performing tasks such as cutting hair, drying hair, waxing or facials
- Make sure all tools are maintained appropriately so they do not need extra effort to use
- Provide positive posture training and regularly promote the need for good posture whilst working.

6.7.1 Engineering Controls

- Provide adequate lighting for the task
- Ensure there is enough room for easy movement around furniture and work areas
- Provide non-slip surfaces that are comfortable for standing
- Provide adjustable styling chairs and stools to avoid working with arms above shoulder height or constantly bending head forward
- Provide adjustable tables / benches / massage couches
- Place required work items within reach and close to waist height
- Provide trolleys with castors to reduce carrying
- Provide padding on table for nail work to protect elbows and underside of arms from nerve damage

6.7.2 Select well designed tools

- Discuss the selection and purchase of new tools and equipment with staff prior to purchase.
- Consider better designed tools that reduce force and awkward grips.
- Make sure that tools such as blow dryers are as light as possible.
- Provide appropriately designed scissors that keep your wrists straight and do not dig into the hand.

6.7.3 Redesign work methods:

- Work as close as possible to the client to reduce bending and reaching.
- Use haircutting stools rather than bending over
- Ensure that the height of the massage bed is adjusted to prevent excessive bending

6.7.4 Administrative controls

- Alternate tasks so that different muscles are used, e.g. recover from cutting hair by folding towels, sweeping floors, reception duties, variation in artificial nail filing techniques
- Manage the number of bookings per worker, particularly those involving demanding tasks, e.g. highlighting hair

6.7.5 Personal protective equipment

- Wear comfortable footwear with shock absorbing soles or inserts if possible

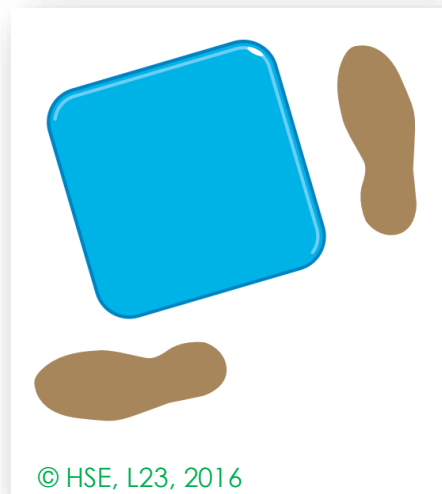
6.8 Manual Handling Procedures

To ensure that the likelihood of accidents and/or injury from manual handling operations (eg when lifting boxes etc) remains low, follow this procedure:

- **Avoid or reduce the task if possible**
Can the item be delivered to the salon? In a large salon, can the product be delivered frequently, therefore in small quantities? Can the delivery person take the items straight into the storage area or place them on a trolley? Can the contents of a box be split into smaller amounts before being moved?
- **Assess the task**
What am I lifting/moving? Where to? Is the floor dry and my route clear, with doors open and lights on? How heavy is the load? How far am I going? Do I need help? Can I use a trolley? Look inside boxes – are the contents evenly distributed? Any loose staples or sharp edges?

➤ **Carry out the task**

- Place your feet at least shoulder width apart and with one foot in front of the other
- Stand close to the load
- Keep your back slightly flexed, bending at the hips as well as the knees
- Take a secure grip of the load and keep your arms close to the body
- Lift by straightening the knees and hips – this uses your leg muscles instead of straining your back
- Do not twist – move your feet, not your waist!



6.9 Resources

For more information, see

[INDG143 Manual handling at work. A brief guide.](#) (HSE)

[INDG383 Manual handling assessment charts \(the MAC tool\)](#) (HSE)

[INDG438 Assessment of repetitive tasks of the upper limbs \(the ART tool\)](#) (HSE)

[L23 Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992](#) (HSE)