



# Implementing MSI prevention programs: Advice from workplaces for workplaces

## A summary

### About this summary

- Workers from all occupational sectors experience musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs).
- MSIs are a substantial burden to society and to workplaces worldwide.
- The known occupational risk factors for MSIs are many, and prevention requires creative solutions that are well implemented.
- This handout summarizes a resource on implementing MSI prevention programs that draws upon the best available research evidence and integrates it with practice evidence; that is, practitioner expertise and stakeholder experiences in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).
- Please refer to the full resource for more implementation details and case examples. See back of this handout for more information.

### Awareness

Awareness programs/practices include initiatives to improve knowledge and recognition of MSIs in the workplace.

- Make sure all workers are aware of the signs and symptoms of MSIs, as well as the work hazards and risk factors that give rise to them.
- Support managers/HR professionals in communicating to workers that MSI prevention is an important issue, the workplace is committed to health and safety, and resources are available to help prevent MSIs.
- Ensure managers and supervisors are committed to and accountable for MSI prevention, and workers know and understand that health and safety are priorities at their workplace.
- Share information about your MSI prevention policies and practices with workers on a regular basis.

### Training

Training programs/practices include informal or formal activities on how to work safely and prevent MSIs.

- Ensure your MSI training reflects the latest evidence-informed practices.
- MSI training materials/information for workers should be as specific as possible to the context of the workplace. Adapt generic materials to your specific workplace environment and job tasks.
- Ensure your MSI training is delivered at regular intervals.



## Hazard identification and solutions

Hazard identification and solution programs/practices include efforts to identify MSI hazards and find solutions to remedy them.

- Tailor and adapt solutions to the specific situations and workplace context of workers.
- Having an MSI prevention policy is important. Ensure such a policy is in place and shared with everyone in the workplace.
- Ensure workers know who is responsible for MSI prevention to aid in the identification of hazards and determine solutions.
- Make sure workers feel safe reporting MSI hazards and know that their concerns and potential solutions are being heard.
- Consider workload accommodations alongside other MSI hazard solutions.
- MSI prevention programs/practices need sufficient resources to be effective. Ensure enough time, personnel, equipment, etc. are being devoted to MSI prevention.
- Ensure workers are getting enough work breaks and encourage them to change their work posture during these breaks.
- Provide an avenue for workers to get involved and have a say about the set-up of their workstations.

## Emerging evidence about exercise

The research evidence indicates that exercise and physical activity programs such as stretching, resistance training and physical conditioning programs are beneficial for both MSI prevention and symptom reduction.

## Conclusion

Having MSI prevention programs/practices is crucial, but proper implementation is necessary if they are to be fully effective. Be proactive when it comes to identifying MSI hazards and finding solutions. Consider the evidence on what helps ensure the successful implementation of MSI prevention programs. Think carefully about what will work for your workplace in particular. Communicate clearly about MSI prevention with all workplace stakeholders—managers, supervisors and workers.

**This is a summary of a resource informed by research and Newfoundland and Labrador practice evidence on implementing successful musculoskeletal injury prevention programs. To access the full resource, go to: [www.iwh.on.ca/tools-and-guides/implementing-msi-prevention-programs-advice-from-workplaces-for-workplaces](http://www.iwh.on.ca/tools-and-guides/implementing-msi-prevention-programs-advice-from-workplaces-for-workplaces).**

This research was conducted by the Institute for Work & Health (IWH) and supported with funds from WorkplaceNL. IWH is supported by the Province of Ontario. The views expressed in this summary are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of WorkplaceNL or the Province of Ontario.

The research team would like to thank and acknowledge the members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the study participants—workplaces and workers across Newfoundland and Labrador—for sharing their time and expertise.



Published by the Institute for Work & Health (IWH), 2020.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons

Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>. This summary can be used and shared as long as IWH is credited as the source, the summary is not modified, and the summary is used for non-commercial purposes.

If you wish to modify and / or use the summary for commercial purposes, please contact: [ip@iwh.on.ca](mailto:ip@iwh.on.ca)

The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not-for-profit organization that promotes, protects and improves the safety and health of working people by conducting actionable research that is valued by employers, workers and policy-makers.

[info@iwh.on.ca](mailto:info@iwh.on.ca)  
[www.iwh.on.ca](http://www.iwh.on.ca)

Institute for Work & Health  
400 University Ave., Suite 1800  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1S5