



ONLINE TOOLS FOR TACKLING MSDs

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are the most common cause of occupational ill health in Great Britain, currently affecting 1 million people a year and costing society £5.7 billion. MSDs affect the muscles, joints, tendons and other parts of the musculoskeletal system.

It is important to understand the risks associated with manual handling and take appropriate measures to assess and ultimately reduce these risks, so the likelihood of suffering from MSDs such as back pain are reduced.

MANUAL HANDLING

According to the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (MHOR) - Manual Handling is defined as:

“...any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or bodily force”

The MHOR 1992 establish a clear hierarchy of measures for dealing with risks from manual handling, these are:

- avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable;
- assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided; and
- reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable.

A detailed assessment of every manual handling operation could be a major undertaking and might involve wasted effort. Many handling operations, for example the occasional lifting of a small lightweight object, will involve negligible handling risk. To help identify situations where a more detailed risk assessment is necessary, HSE has developed a filter to screen out straightforward cases.

MAC TOOL

The MAC tool has been developed to help the user identify high risk workplace manual handling activities.

The tool can be used to assess the risks posed by lifting, carrying and team manual handling activities. It is designed to help you understand, interpret and categorise the level of risk of the various known risk factors associated with manual handling activities. The MAC incorporates a numerical and a colour coding score system to highlight high risk manual handling tasks.

There were some errors in the previous version, published in January 2014, which means the HSE had to issue a revised version. The changes mainly affect the illustrations, but we advise you to make sure you are using the latest version.



HOW MAC WORKS

The MAC uses a numerical score and a traffic light approach to indicate the level of risk.

The MAC considers manual handling as three types of distinct operation:

- Single Lifting operation
- Single Carrying operation
- Team Handling operation

These operations are divided into the different manual handling factors and presented as a flow chart. The flow chart leads you, step-by-step, through each factor of the manual handling operation, enabling you to evaluate and grade the degree of risk. Each operation is supported by an assessment guide or aide memoire. These discuss each factor of the flow chart giving helpful pointers to help you to score the task you are observing. To enable you to calculate the risk for the load and frequency of a lifting/carrying operation, a graph is supplied with the flowchart.

Using the MAC will help with the initial screening of possible high risk manual handling activities within the workplace. However, the MAC is NOT appropriate for all manual handling operations, and does NOT comprise a full risk assessment. Therefore it is unlikely to be acceptable if relied upon alone.

To be “suitable and sufficient”, a risk assessment will normally need to take account of additional information such as individual capabilities (factors), and should conform to the requirements in the MHOR 1992 (available from HSE Books). Persons with knowledge and experience of the handling operations, industry specific guidance, and specialist advice, may be of assistance. Remember, consult and involve employees and safety reps.

WHAT IS ART?

Repetitive tasks are made up of a sequence of upper limb actions, of fairly short duration, which are repeated over and over again, and are almost always the same (eg stitching a piece of cloth, manufacturing one part, packaging one item).

ART is most suited for tasks that:

- involve actions of the upper limbs;
- repeat every few minutes, or even more frequently; and – occur for at least 1–2 hours per day or shift.
- the tasks are typically found in assembly, production, processing, packaging, packing and sorting work, as well as work involving the regular use of hand tools.

ART is not intended for Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments

The ART tool is available here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg438.pdf>



The Assessment of Repetitive Tasks (ART) tool is designed to help you risk assess tasks that require repetitive movement of the upper limbs (arms and hands). It assists you in assessing some of the common risk factors in repetitive work that contribute to the development of Upper Limb Disorders (ULDs).

The ART tool is intended for people with responsibility for the design, assessment, management, and inspection of repetitive work.

Repetitive tasks are typically found in assembly, production, processing, packaging, packing and sorting work, as well as work involving regular use of hand tools.

WHY USE THE ART TOOL?

The ART tool is a method that helps to:

- Identify repetitive tasks that have significant risks and where to focus risk reduction measures
- Prioritise repetitive tasks for improvement
- Consider possible risk reduction measures
- Meet legal requirements to ensure the health and safety of employees who perform repetitive work

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The ART tool uses a numerical score and a traffic light approach to indicate the level of risk for twelve factors. These factors are grouped into four stages:

A: Frequency and repetition of movements

B: Force

C: Awkward postures of the neck, back, arm, wrist and hand

D: Additional factors, including breaks and duration

The factors are presented on a flow chart, which leads you, step-by-step, to evaluate and grade the degree of risk.

The tool is supported by an assessment guide, providing instruction to help you to score the repetitive task you are observing. There is also a worksheet to record your assessment.