

# Occupational Health In Catering Industry



Occupational Safety and Health Branch  
Labour Department



*safety at work*

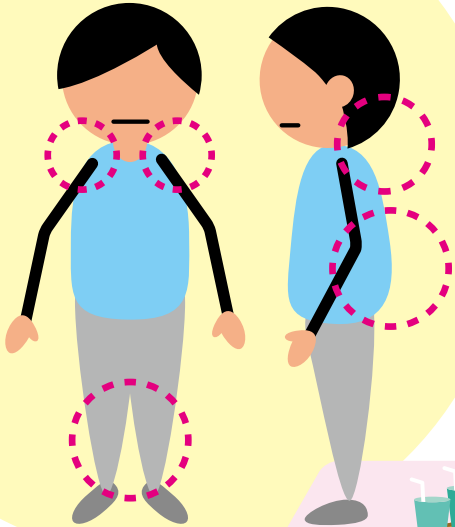
# Introduction

Catering industry is one of the most important industries in Hong Kong. This pamphlet aims at providing employers and employees with a brief description of various occupational health problems in this industry and the corresponding preventive measures.

Common occupational health problems in the catering industry include:

## Musculoskeletal Disorders

Workers in catering industry may develop symptoms of various musculoskeletal disorders in different parts of the body such as the upper limbs, lower limbs, neck and back.



## Common causes

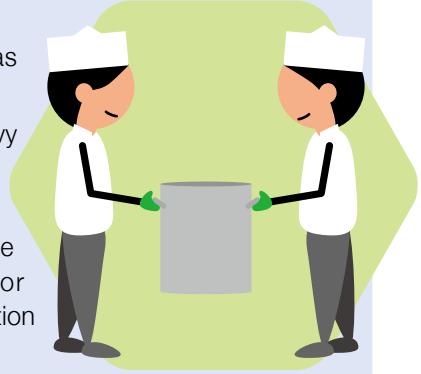
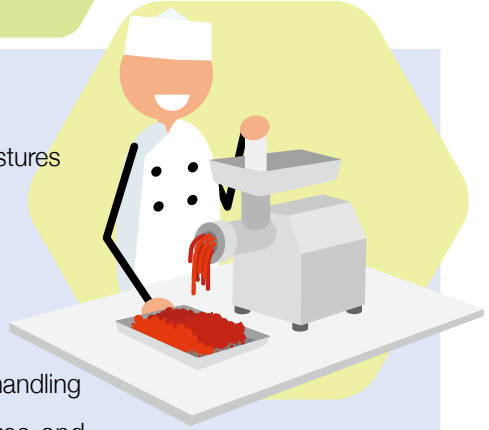
- ◆ Improper working posture
  - Prolonged bending of the neck
  - Overstretching of the body
- ◆ Frequent forceful or repetitive work



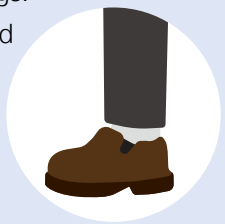
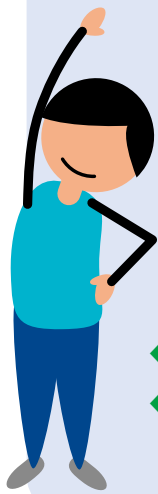
- ◆ Improper manual lifting
  - Heavy loads
  - Incorrect posture in lifting heavy objects
- ◆ Standing at work or prolonged walking
- ◆ Wearing inappropriate shoes

# Preventive measures

- ◆ Adopt natural and comfortable working postures
  - Change working posture periodically
  - Use suitable tools and aids to avoid overstretching of the body
- ◆ Use mechanical aids such as food mixer
- ◆ Provide training to staff on proper manual handling
  - Use proper manual handling postures and techniques
  - Use mechanical and handling aids such as trolley
  - Use team approach in lifting or divide a heavy load into smaller components



- ◆ As far as reasonably practicable, provide a suitable work chair or a chair for occasional sitting at the working location for the employee standing at work
  - Flexible work arrangement allows employees to relieve lower limbs fatigue
  - Arrange intermittent sitting for employees, such as 10-15 minutes break for 2-3 hours continuous standing work or perform appropriate stretching exercises to relax their legs.
  - Shock absorbent mat could be used
- ◆ Wear suitable and supportive shoes
- ◆ Do regular stretching exercises

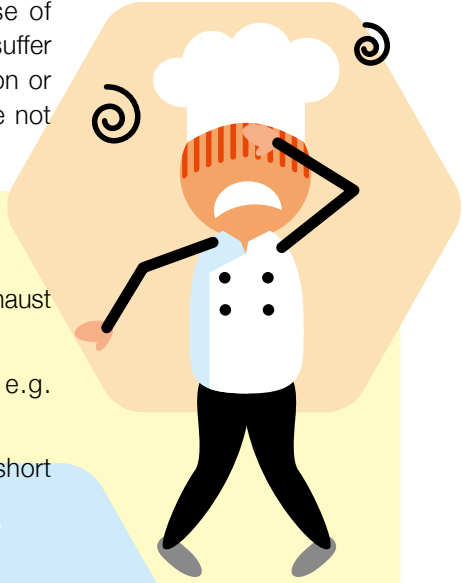


# Heat-related problems

Kitchens become hot and humid during the use of stoves, ovens as well as steamers. Worker may suffer from heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke if appropriate preventive measures are not adopted.

## Preventive measures

- ◆ Install a proper ventilation system including exhaust hoods
- ◆ Consider use of less heat emitted stove e.g. induction cookers
- ◆ Make arrangements for employees to take short breaks in a cool place



- ◆ Provide cool drinking water
- ◆ Workers to drink water regularly
- ◆ Worker to wear suitable clothing, e.g. light-coloured, loosely-fitted clothing where it does not pose a safety concern

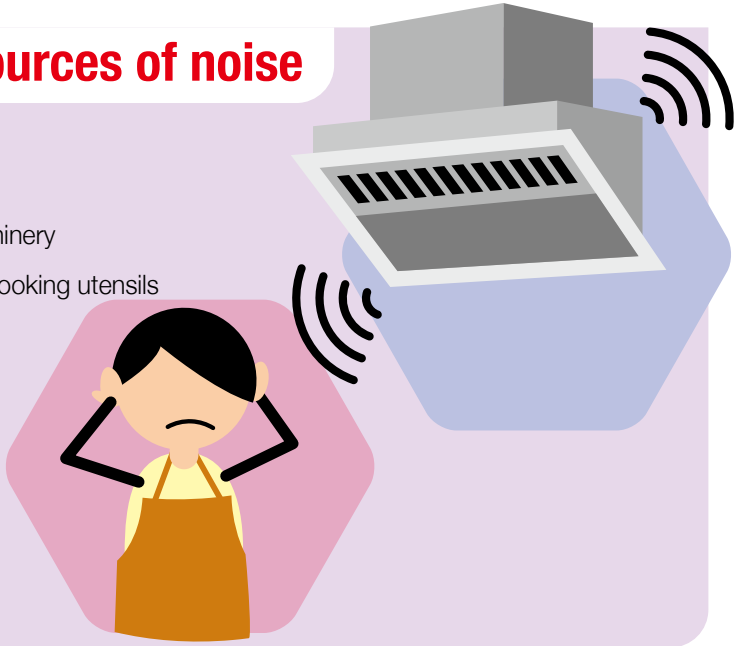


# Noise-related problems

Worker can suffer from hearing loss if they are exposed to loud noise for a prolonged period.

## Common sources of noise

- ◆ Stove
- ◆ Ventilation system
- ◆ Operation of machinery
- ◆ Impact between cooking utensils



## Preventive measures

- ◆ Identify and control noise sources
- ◆ Maintain and repair machinery regularly
- ◆ Wear hearing protective devices, e.g. ear plugs, when necessary

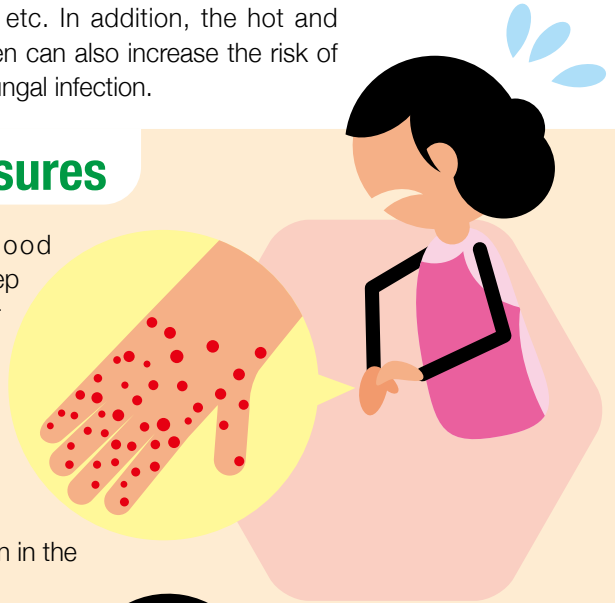


# Skin problems

Occupational dermatitis is a common health problem among workers. It can be caused by prolonged exposure to water, soap, detergent, or foodstuff, etc. In addition, the hot and humid environment in the kitchen can also increase the risk of workers getting heat rash and fungal infection.

## Preventive measures

- ◆ Workers to observe good personal hygiene, and keep skin clean and dry after work
- ◆ Workers to wear appropriate personal protective equipment, e.g. gloves
- ◆ Ensure adequate ventilation in the workplace



## Enquiries

If you wish to enquire about this leaflet or other occupational safety and health (OSH) matters, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of the Labour Department:

Tel. : 2852 4041 or  
2559 2297 (auto-recording service available outside office hours)

Fax : 2581 2049

Email : [enquiry@labour.gov.hk](mailto:enquiry@labour.gov.hk)

Information on the services offered by the Labour Department and on major labour legislation is also available on our website at [www.labour.gov.hk](http://www.labour.gov.hk).

## Occupational Health Clinics of the Labour Department

Any worker who may have contracted work-related illnesses can call or visit the Occupational Health Clinics for appointment booking. Doctor's referral is not required.

- Kwun Tong Occupational Health Clinic Tel.: 2343 7133
- Fanling Occupational Health Clinic Tel.: 3543 5701

## Complaints

If you have any complaint about unsafe operations or environments at workplaces, please call the Labour Department's OSH complaint hotline at 2542 2172 or fill in and submit an online OSH complaint form on our website. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.



Online OSH complaint Form



This leaflet can be issued free of charge and can be obtained from offices of the Occupational Health Service of the Labour Department (LD). It can also be downloaded from the LD's website at [www.labour.gov.hk](http://www.labour.gov.hk). For enquiries about the addresses and telephone numbers of the offices, please visit the LD's website or call 2852 4041.

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