

Precautions

Installing resilient floors

- Hard, unyielding floors like concrete or metal floors could aggravate the health risks of prolonged standing. If practicable, resilient floors such as wooden or carpeted ones should be installed instead to reduce the stress on the legs.
- Otherwise, shock absorbent mats should be placed at the areas where employees have to stand for long periods at work. In so doing, it is important that the mats will not cause any tripping or falling hazard.
- In adopting the above measures, employers should also follow the requirements of other relevant authorities on the floors of catering establishments.



Hard floor covered with a shock absorbent mat to reduce the stress on the legs of employees.

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Precautions

Wearing suitable shoes

- Wearing comfortable and supportive shoes could minimize the health risks of prolonged standing. The following should be noted in choosing suitable shoes:
 - ◆ Not changing the shape of the feet;
 - ◆ Having adequate space to allow movement of toes;
 - ◆ Having support for the arch of the foot, i.e. no flat shoes;
 - ◆ Having shock-absorbing insoles if the employees have to stand on non-resilient floors for long periods;
 - ◆ Having low heels, i.e. not higher than 5 cm (2 inches).
- Kitchen floor may be slippery due to spillage of water or contamination by oily substances. Kitchen workers could reduce the risk of slipping by wearing slip-resistant shoes.



Wearing slip-resistant shoes could reduce the risk of slipping in kitchen.

Exercising your legs

- Employees should be encouraged to perform appropriate exercises to relax their legs during work breaks. It helps to relieve the fatigue and discomfort of the legs after prolonged standing.

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Enquiries

If you wish to enquire about this leaflet or require advice on occupational health and hygiene issues, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of the Labour Department through:

Telephone : 2852 4041

Fax : 2581 2049

E-mail : enquiry@labour.gov.hk

Information on the services offered by the Labour Department and on major labour legislation can also be found on our website at <http://www.labour.gov.hk>.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about unsafe workplaces and practices, please call the Labour Department's occupational safety and health complaint hotline on 2542 2172. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.

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Guide on Prevention of Health Hazards of Prolonged Standing for the Catering Industry



Introduction

Employees in the catering industry are often required to stand for long periods during work. Prolonged standing may cause muscle aches and fatigue, and even diseases of the legs like varicose vein and plantar fasciitis in the long term. This guide aims to provide practical guidance to employers and employees in the catering industry on precautions for minimizing the health risks of prolonged standing.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance and its subsidiary regulations, employers have the responsibility to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the safety and health of their employees at work, and employees are required to cooperate with their employers to protect their own safety and health and those of any other persons who may be affected.



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Precautions

Providing seats at the workplace

- Unless operational needs warrant otherwise, employers should ensure that work is organized in such a way to allow employees to be seated.
- For task that may be done in either sitting or standing position like cashier's work, employers should provide seats for the employees and encourage them to sit rather than stand while working.



Seats should be provided for cashiers so that they could sit when working.



Seat provided in the resting area for employees to take rest.

- In circumstances where sitting is not appropriate because of operational needs, employers should ensure that rest breaks at suitable intervals are arranged for the employees, and seats are provided for them in the resting area.

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Precautions

Changing the working posture

- For employees having to stand at a fixed posture for long periods, employers should arrange job rotation, if practicable, to allow them to change their postures while performing work of a different nature.



Suitable work arrangements allow employees to change their working postures regularly.

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Precautions

- For reception counters without seats, a foot-rail or footrest should be installed at a suitable location to allow the employees to place one leg on the rail/rest alternately to reduce the fatigue whilst standing. There should be adequate legroom for the employees to keep their bodies close to the counters without stretching.



A foot-rail/footrest installed at a reception counter for the receptionists to rest their legs alternately.

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