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

Reference publications
1. Catering Industry - Hints on Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders
3. More Exercises Smart Work (I) and (II)
4. Do you know Tenosynovitis?
5. Work-related Neck and Back Pain
6. Work-related disease series - Plantar Fasciitis
7. Work-related disease series - Lower Limb Varicose Vein
8. Work-related disease series - Osteoarthritis of Knee
10. Risk Assessment for the Prevention of Heat stroke at Work
12. Risk Assessment for the Prevention of Health Hazards of Prolonged standing

This pamphlet together with the above listed publications and references can be obtained free of charge from offices of the Labour Department or downloaded from the department’s website: www.labour.gov.hk

Occupational Health Clinics of the Labour Department
Kwun Tong Occupational Health Clinic
Telephone: 2243 7133
Fanling Occupational Health Clinic
Telephone: 3543 5701

Enquiries
For enquiries on this pamphlet or advice on occupational health and hygiene issues, please contact the Labour Department’s Occupational Safety and Health Branch through:
Telephone: 2852 4041
Fax: 2581 2049
Email: 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: www.labour.gov.hk

Complaints
If you have any complaints about unsafe workplaces and work practices, please call the Labour Department’s Occupational Safety and Health Complaint Hotline at 2542 2172. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.
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. For further information, please refer to “Reference publications” in this pamphlet.

Common occupational health problems in the catering industry include:

Musculoskeletal problems
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 include:

- Improper working posture
  - Prolonged bending of the neck
  - Oversstretching 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 suitable tools and aids to reduce forceful or repetitive movements
- Do regular stretching exercises
- Provide training to staff on proper manual lifting techniques
  - Use team approach in lifting heavy objects or divide a heavy load into parts for easy handling
  - Adopt correct posture in lifting heavy objects
- 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 lower limb exercises
- Shock absorbent mat could be used
- Wear comfortable shoes with appropriate insoles

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
- Workers to wear suitable clothing, e.g. light-coloured, loosely-fitted clothing where it does not pose a safety concern
- Worker be mindful of their physical conditions. To inform supervisor and seek medical help immediately if the early symptoms of heat-related illnesses such as headache or thirst appear

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
- Loud speaker
- 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