

Occupational Health for Meat and Poultry Workers

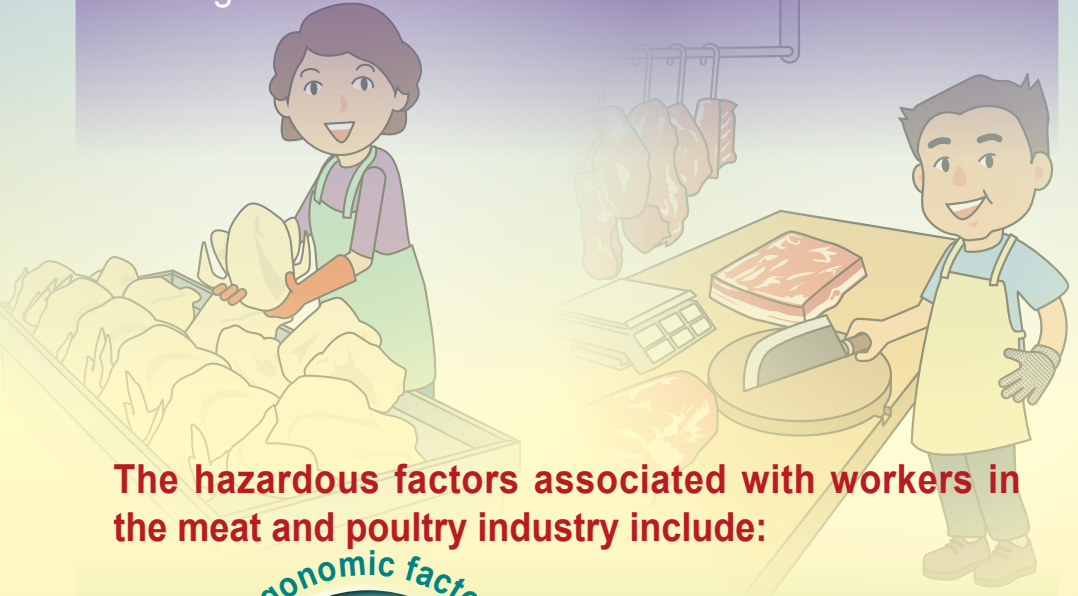


Occupational Safety and Health Branch
Labour Department



Introduction

Workers selling meat, live poultry or frozen meat in markets, shops and supermarkets are always exposed to various work-related hazardous factors that may endanger their health.



The hazardous factors associated with workers in the meat and poultry industry include:

Ergonomic factors

For example, the height of the workbench or the size of the tool used does not match the body size of the employee

Biological factors

Such as bacteria, virus and fungi

The objective of this leaflet is to increase the awareness and alertness of both employers and employees of the meat and poultry industry to these hazardous factors and recommend some specific preventive measures for their reference.

1. Ergonomic factors

Musculoskeletal Disorders



Back strain

Low back pain

- Frequent handling of raw meat and carrying of heavy objects in a bending or twisting posture

Upper limb strain

Tenosynovitis of the hand or forearm

- Repetitive movements in cutting meat, such as boning, cutting meat chunks and chopping chicken pieces



Lower limb strain

Varicose veins of the lower limb



- Standing at the meat stall with restricted movement at work may increase the venous pressure in the lower limb.

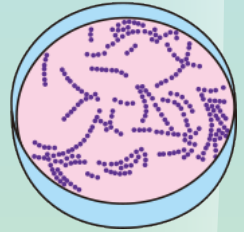
Plantar fasciitis

- Standing at the meat stall with restricted movement or frequent carrying of heavy objects may increase the stress on the foot.
- Wearing unsuitable shoes, such as flat shoes or slippers.

2. Biological factors

Streptococcus suis Infection

- Exposure through wounds on the skin while handling infected pigs or other animals, raw pork and other pig products, may result in Streptococcus suis infection.
- The disease may cause acute meningitis and present with fever, headache and vomiting. It may also present with subcutaneous bleeding. The characteristic complication is deafness.



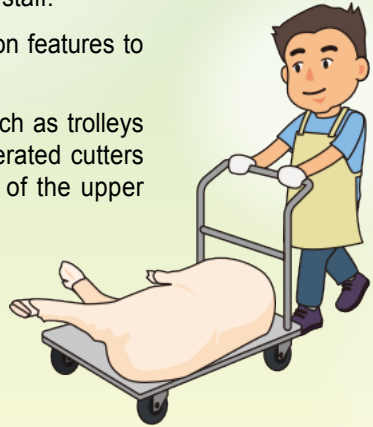
Avian Influenza

- People become infected with avian influenza virus through contact with infected birds and poultry (live or dead) or their droppings, or contact with contaminated environments such as wet markets and live poultry markets.
- Clinical features include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches and chest infection. In severe cases, it can result in respiratory failure, multi-organ failure and even death.

Preventive Measures

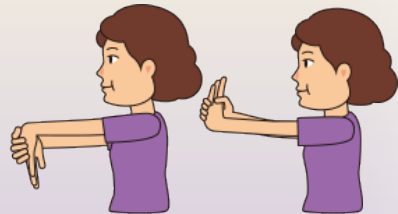
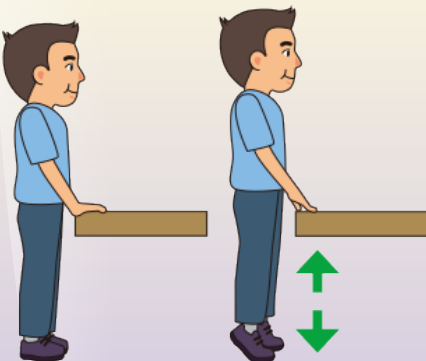
Suitable equipment and tools

- Provide working tables of suitable height for staff.
- Use mats with anti-slip and shock absorption features to reduce pressure on the foot.
- Use suitable tools and mechanical aids, such as trolleys to reduce manual handling, and power-operated cutters or slicers to reduce repetitive movements of the upper limbs.
- Employers shall, so far as reasonably practicable, provide suitable chairs for the employees to occasionally sit down for a rest.



Good work habits and work arrangement

- Adopt proper lifting postures: keep the back straight, bend the knees to squat, do not bend the body
- Arrange suitable rest time
- Do regular stretching exercises



Maintain good hygiene at the working environment

- Provide sufficient working space, lighting and ventilation.
- Keep the workplace clean and hygienic, remove or control sources of infection to reduce the chance of transmission.
- Every day after business hours, workers at live poultry market stalls should disinfect the walls, floors, large tools, utensils, cages, trays and other equipment thoroughly with 1:49 diluted household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite), then rinse with cold water and let dry. Workers should wear protective clothing before cleaning and disinfecting.



Maintain good personal hygiene



- Wear protective gloves when handling pigs or poultry.
- Wear cut-resistant gloves when cutting raw meat to avoid infections caused by cuts.
- If there are cuts or wounds on the hand, clean and bandage properly without delay to prevent infection.
- Never touch the mouth, nose or eyes when handling pigs or poultry. Wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water afterwards.
- Wash hands frequently and keep them clean. Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel.
- Suspend from engaging in any food handling work when suffering or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease or symptoms of illness. Wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms. Seek medical advice promptly.



Select suitable shoes

- Select shoes with good support and shock absorption features



Maintain a healthy lifestyle

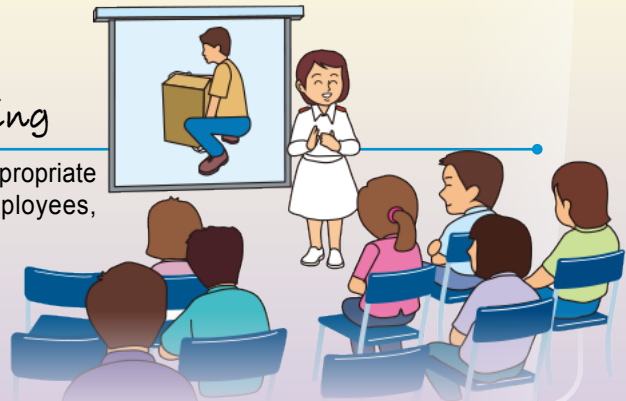
A healthy lifestyle can enhance the body's defence system and reduce the chance of infection.

- Follow a balanced diet
- Do physical activities regularly
- Have adequate rest and sleep
- Keep a good mood
- Quit smoking and avoid alcohol



Provide appropriate information and training

- Employers should provide appropriate training and guidance to employees, such as proper lifting methods and preventive measures for related infectious diseases.



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
- 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.
- For details on the services offered by the Occupational Safety and Health Council, please call 2739 9000 or browse its website at www.oshc.org.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 is issued free of charge and can be obtained from offices of the Occupational Health Service of the Labour Department. It can also be downloaded from the Labour Department's website at www.labour.gov.hk. For enquiries about the addresses and telephone numbers of the offices, please visit the Labour Department's website or call 2852 4041.

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