

Cleaning

These are the most common injuries and hazards for people cleaning in Victorian workplaces, as shown by injury claims.

Ear

Hearing loss from long-term exposure to noisy cleaning equipment.

Arm

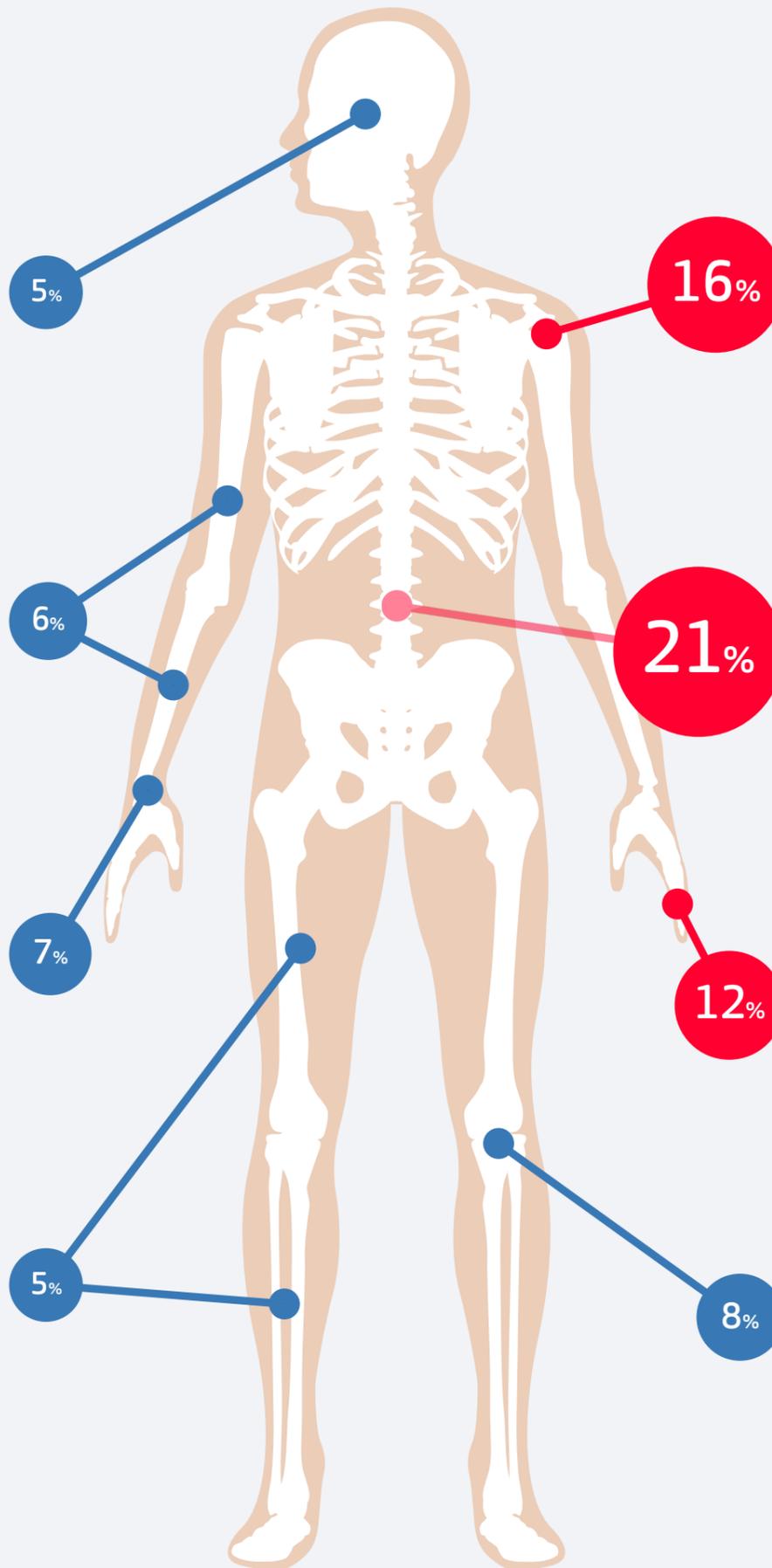
Muscle strain from lifting and handling cleaning equipment, or from repetitive cleaning actions (e.g. mopping, vacuuming, wiping, or scrubbing).

Forearm/Wrist

Muscle strain from repetitive cleaning activities (e.g. scrubbing or polishing). Fractures from falling or tripping on slippery floors or down stairs.

Leg

Fractures and traumatic joint/muscle injury from tripping over objects, falling down steps, or slipping on wet floors.



Shoulder

Muscle strain from lifting and handling cleaning equipment, or from repetitive cleaning actions (e.g. reaching while cleaning walls, ceilings, or furniture).

Back

Muscle strain from lifting or bending while handling cleaning equipment, or from repetitive cleaning actions (e.g. mopping or vacuuming floors, or carrying equipment).

Hand/Fingers

Lacerations from cleaning sharp tools, equipment and machinery (e.g. food preparation machines), including while the machine is running. Needlestick injury when handling bags. Exposure to chemicals and hot or cold materials.

Knee

Traumatic joint/muscle injury from slipping on soiled floors, or tripping over obstacles. Muscle strain from kneeling, climbing, or pushing or pulling equipment or trolleys.

Safety solutions

WorkSafe expects employers to have safety solutions in place to protect workers from injury and illness.

Below are some common solutions known to reduce the risk of injury. Employers should work together with their employees to determine the most effective solutions for their workplace.

Hotspots

Solution

Cuts, grazes and lacerations

● Hand/Fingers

- Develop and implement appropriate systems of work (e.g. use a 'clean-in-place' system to eliminate manual cleaning eg dishwashers, factory floor systems).
- Ensure equipment is isolated and locked out before cleaning.
- Provide appropriate personal protective equipment to clean machines with sharp components/edges (e.g. brushes, scrapers, gloves that cannot be pierced).
- Provide sufficient 'sharps' containers so needles are not disposed of in bags.

Handling chemicals

● Hand/Fingers

- Treat all chemicals as potentially dangerous to health, unless material safety data sheet (MSDS) or label states otherwise.
- Obtain material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all dangerous goods and hazardous chemicals at your workplace, and ensure employees have access to them.
- Eliminate the substance from use or if you can't eliminate, use a less harmful product or process or a less hazardous form of the substance (e.g. a non-bleach based cleaning product).
- Train employees on safe work practices that reduce exposure (e.g. re-seal containers, clean up spills and restrict unnecessary access).
- Provide personal protective clothing and equipment (e.g. gloves, equipment that protects against hot water burns such as aprons) for employees.

Lifting/handling of equipment and waste

● Back

● Shoulder

● Arm

- Provide appropriate mechanical aids and equipment (e.g. backpack vacuum cleaners, waste dumping systems that eliminate manual lifting of waste and bins such as chutes, waste conveyors, disposal units, bins designed for unloading over skips - if this can't be done, mechanical aids that assist lifting such as mechanical wheelie bin lifters, or use smaller bins, platform ladders and ramps to minimise lifting) and ensure they are used properly and maintained in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
- Ensure building layout/design limits the need to push, pull or carry equipment, bins or waste (e.g. pathways are clear of obstructions, goods lifts, ducted vacuum systems).
- Ensure bins have wheels or provide a trolley.
- Train employees in the selection and use of any mechanical equipment and aids and safe handling methods.
- Ensure employees are not exposed to repetitive work for long periods (e.g. by using job rotation, work variation, providing sit-stand stools and anti-fatigue mats) or work that requires a significant amount of high force.

Noise

● Ear

- Ensure employees are not exposed to noise that exceeds the exposure standard.
- Arrange for a noise assessment if employees are exposed to excessive noise (e.g. workers have to raise their voices to communicate over a distance of one metre) and there is uncertainty as to whether employees exposure may have exceeded the noise exposure standard.
- Eliminate or minimise the source of noise. Use noise insulated equipment (e.g. silence compressors) and separate workers from noisy activities.
- Buy the quietest tools/machinery available (e.g. scrubbers, vacuum cleaners).
- Place warning signs in areas of excessive and continual noise (e.g. where employees exposure is likely to exceed the exposure standard).
- Warn other workers nearby that you will be undertaking noisy work and advise them to move away or wear hearing protection.
- Provide hearing equipment, ensure it is worn at all times, and provide employees with audiometric testing. Employers should provide a choice of different types of hearing protection appropriate to the noise level in the workplace.

Repetitive work and awkward postures

- Back
- Shoulder
- Knee
- Forearm/Wrist
- Arm

- Provide appropriate mechanical aids and equipment (e.g. scrubbing machines, wet vacuums, ride-on equipment, high speed in-line polishers, angled brushes, long-handled window squeegee/wall scrubber, tool extensions, platform ladders) and ensure they are used properly and maintained in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
- Train employees in the selection and use of any mechanical equipment and aids and safe handling methods (e.g. work is done between shoulder and mid-thigh height and with the elbows close to the body, work upright where possible).
- Ensure employees are not exposed to repetitive work for long periods (e.g. by using job rotation, work variation, providing sit-stand stools and anti-fatigue mats).

Slips, trips and falls

- Shoulder
- Knee
- Forearm/Wrist
- Leg

- Ensure floors are level and non-slip throughout work areas, and no temporary or permanent obstructions (e.g. install more power points to eliminate long power leads, ensure rugs and carpets are secure).
- Apply good housekeeping practise (e.g. remove unnecessary items, provide sufficient storage, ensure items are put away, doors and drawers closed after use).
- Ensure employees wear appropriate footwear (e.g. non-slip).
- Ensure procedures are in place to handle spills and wet cleaning (e.g. warning signs barriers and immediate clean up).

Visit www.injuryhotspots.com.au
WorkSafe Advisory Service Toll-free 1800 136 089

Your health and safety contact is:

You must consult with the people who will be affected by changes before any changes affecting their occupational safety or health are put in place. If someone is injured at work, their employer must ensure they receive proper care and support their safe return to work. WorkSafe Victoria is a trading name of the Victorian WorkCover Authority.