When Your Body Beats You: Preventing Over-Exertion and Musculoskeletal Injury Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Overexertion Strain:** Lifting, pulling, or pushing beyond your strength causes sudden muscle and tendon overload, leading to sprains, strains, and tears.
2. **Repetitive Motion Fatigue:** Repeating the same movement for long periods breaks down tissue faster than it can repair, increasing the risk of chronic injury.
3. **Awkward Postures:** Working with your back twisted, arms overhead, or knees bent puts joints under abnormal stress that leads to musculoskeletal damage.
4. **Forceful Exertion:** Tasks requiring high physical force—like lifting heavy tools, dragging hoses, or handling materials—increase the chance of acute back and shoulder injuries.
5. **Poor Warm-Up:** Starting heavy physical work without preparing the body reduces flexibility and muscle readiness, raising the risk of sudden strain.
6. **Fatigue-Driven Errors:** Physical exhaustion reduces body control and reaction time, causing slips, improper lifting, and uncontrolled movements.

STATS

- In the US, musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) resulted in 976,090 days-away, restricted, or transferred (DART) cases in the private sector during 2021-2022, with overexertion as a primary cause.
- Overexertion accounted for nearly 22% of all workplace injuries in the US in 2020, leading to significant lost work time and contributing to MSD prevalence.
- In Canada, MSDs represent about 35% of lost-time claims submitted to WorkSafeNB from 2020-2024, often stemming from overexertion in repetitive or forceful tasks.
- US employers face an estimated $20 billion annually in workers’ compensation costs for over 1 million MSD injuries, predominantly from

overexertion and bodily reaction (2020-2025 data).

- In 2022, Canada recorded 348,747 accepted lost-time injury claims, with overexertion and MSDs disproportionately affecting high-risk sectors like manufacturing and healthcare.
- Overexertion incidents in the US caused an incidence rate of 51.0 per 10,000 full-time workers in 2020-2022, resulting in a median of 11-12 days away from work per case.