




# WORKSAFE

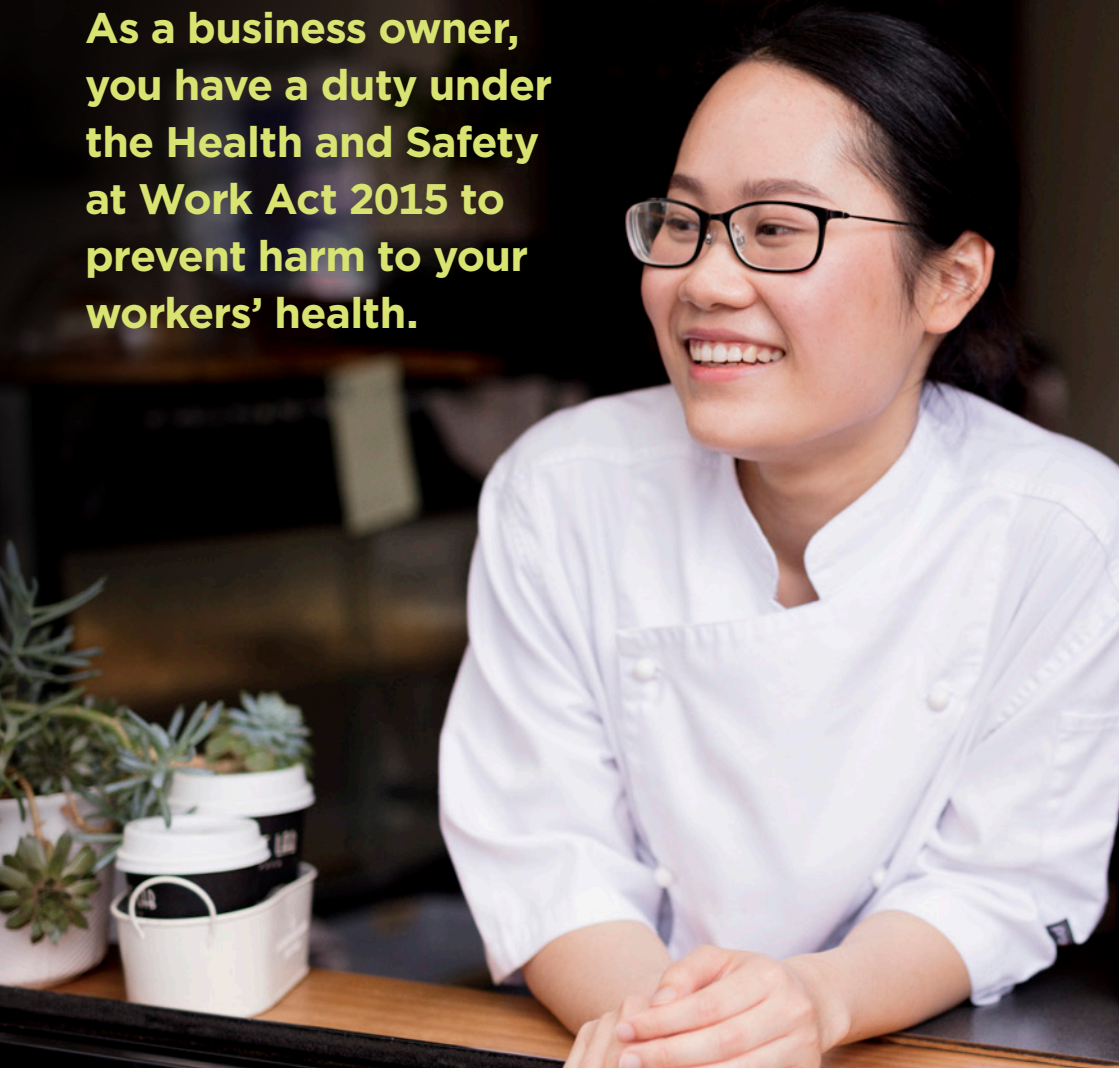
## Healthy workers

Advice for small business owners on managing health risks for workers.



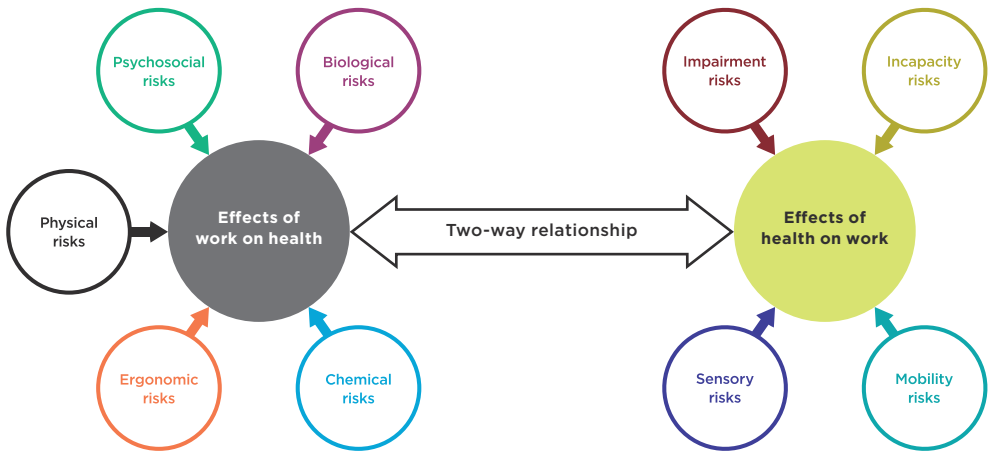
The health of your workers is just as important as the health of your business.

**As a business owner, you have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to prevent harm to your workers' health.**



# What does WorkSafe mean by work-related health?

Work can affect health, just as health can affect a worker's ability to work safely. In general, work-related health risks fall into five categories, and health-related safety risks fall into four categories. You should consider both of these, and the interaction between the effects of work on health and the effects of all health on work, when managing the risks in your workplace.



## EFFECTS OF WORK ON HEALTH

Work-related health risks have the potential to harm a person's health in these ways:

- **physical risks** – for example, exposure to workplace noise may lead to noise-induced hearing loss
- **chemical risks** – for example, exposure to solvents may lead to occupational asthma
- **biological risks** – for example, exposure to animal bacteria may lead to sudden and severe illnesses
- **ergonomic risks** – for example, repeated lifting of heavy or bulky items may lead to low back pain
- **psychosocial risks** – for example, bullying at work may lead to work-related stress.








## EFFECTS OF HEALTH ON WORK

Health-related safety risks have the potential to lead to safety incidents and acute harm in these ways:

- **sensory risks** – for example, changes in a worker's hearing or eyesight may prevent them from correctly or quickly identifying and reacting to a workplace risk
- **impairment risks** – for example, fatigue may lead to reduced concentration
- **mobility risks** – for example, physical frailty restrictions may prevent a worker from moving out of the way of an oncoming vehicle
- **incapacity risks** – for example, an unknown or poorly controlled heart condition may lead to a worker suddenly losing consciousness while involved in a safety-critical task.

# How can I manage common health risks

Use the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach to manage the health risks in your business. You can identify, assess and manage the risks to your workers using this approach. See our examples for ideas on how some of the common health risks can be managed:

	 <b>Dust</b>	 <b>Noise</b>	 <b>Fatigue</b>
 <b>Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walk around your workplace: what are the health hazards?</li> <li>- Look at work processes, equipment used, the workplace itself and workers' activities.</li> <li>- Ask your workers about the health hazards they notice.</li> <li>- Identify the workers that may be more at-risk to health hazards.</li> <li>- Think about the consequences of being exposed to the hazards you have found. How likely are these to occur?</li> <li>- Identify hazards where exposure monitoring can be set up to monitor the level of exposure to workers.</li> <li>- Seek help from a health and safety professional, especially to conduct exposure monitoring.</li> </ul>		
 <b>Do</b>	<b>ELIMINATE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use different materials.</li> </ul> <b>MINIMISE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use wet working suppression methods.</li> <li>- Install dust collection systems.</li> <li>- Wash clothing exposed to dust.</li> <li>- Provide worker training on dust hazards and risks.</li> <li>- Provide respiratory protective equipment.</li> </ul>	<b>ELIMINATE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove the source of noise or replace with equipment that is below harmful levels.</li> </ul> <b>MINIMISE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain plant and equipment</li> <li>- Use noise insulated enclosures.</li> <li>- Relocate noisy machinery to less populated areas.</li> <li>- Provide appropriate hearing protection for workers in addition to other controls.</li> <li>- Provide training in fitting and maintenance of hearing protection.</li> </ul>	<b>MINIMISE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage work schedules and shift length.</li> <li>- Schedule demanding tasks at hours when workers are more alert.</li> <li>- Limit work that has excessive mental or physical demands.</li> </ul>
 <b>Check</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make sure that noise exposure monitoring is conducted (by a professional if needed).</li> <li>- Provide respiratory health monitoring for workers with an experienced health professional.</li> <li>- Set up a system for workers to actively report any concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor noise levels on site.</li> <li>- Provide audiometry tests for workers exposed to noise.</li> <li>- Encourage workers to actively report any concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talk to your workers about their levels of fatigue.</li> <li>- Encourage a positive work culture for workers to report and discuss fatigue.</li> </ul>
 <b>Act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talk with workers about the results of the health monitoring and exposure monitoring tests</li> <li>- <b>Change the work environment and methods or materials used where necessary.</b></li> <li>- Regularly review work activities to identify new risks.</li> <li>- <b>Seek expert advice from a health and safety professional.</b></li> <li>- Refer to WorkSafe or industry guidance for help.</li> <li>- Educate workers on the health hazards and health risks in your workplace and continually address gaps in their knowledge.</li> </ul>		





### Manual handling



### Sun exposure



### Chemicals

## Plan

- Walk around your workplace: what are the health hazards?
- Look at work processes, equipment used, the workplace itself and workers' activities.
- Ask your workers about the health hazards they notice.
- Identify the workers that may be more at-risk to health hazards.
- Think about the consequences of being exposed to the hazards you have found. How likely are these to occur?
- Identify hazards where exposure monitoring can be set up to monitor the level of exposure to workers.
- Seek help from a health and safety professional, especially to conduct exposure monitoring.

## Do

**ELIMINATE**

- Re-design work areas, tasks and processes to eliminate need for manual handling.

**MINIMISE**

- Consider smaller, less awkward packages.
- Provide mechanical aids and equipment.
- Change site layout to reduce pushing, pulling or carrying equipment and loads.
- Limit ongoing and repetitive work.
- Train workers on safe handling methods.

**MINIMISE**

- Move task indoors.
- Set up shade.
- Limit time spent outdoors.
- Educate workers on sun exposure risks and how to check for skin changes.
- Provide sunscreen and clothing eg hats and sunglasses.

**ELIMINATE**

- Use alternative products.
- Dispose of surplus products.

**MINIMISE**

- Clearly label and safely store hazardous chemicals.
- Apply controls to minimise risks.
- Keep information up to date, including inventory of chemicals and safety data sheets for each chemical.
- Provide health and safety information and training for workers.
- Provide appropriate PPE for workers.

## Check

- Talk to workers about their experiences handling heavy or awkward loads.
- Encourage workers to actively report any concerns.


- Encourage self-checking and reporting from workers.
- Check how often reports of excessive sun exposure and sunburn are made.
- Encourage workers to seek specialist advice for skin changes.
- Check the UVI index for changes to UV levels in your location throughout the day - has the risk increased?

- Make sure exposure monitoring is conducted.
- Keep a hazard register and review incidents involving exposure to chemicals.
- Talk to your workers about their level of exposure.

## Act

- Talk with workers about the results of the health monitoring and exposure monitoring tests.
- **Change the work environment and methods or materials used where necessary.**
- Regularly review work activities to identify new risks.
- **Seek expert advice from a health and safety professional.**
- Refer to WorkSafe or industry guidance for help.
- Educate workers on the health hazards and health risks in your workplace and continually address gaps in their knowledge.

Your workplace may have other health hazards. See our website for more information about other health hazards your business might have and ideas on how to manage these.

A man wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a dark baseball cap is sitting on a wooden crate in a greenhouse. He is holding a large white bucket on his lap. The greenhouse is filled with rows of tomato plants, many of which have ripe, red tomatoes. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a sunny day. The man is looking down at the plants, possibly inspecting them or preparing to harvest. The overall scene depicts a worker in a food production environment.

It's time we change  
how we think about  
worker health in  
New Zealand.



A worker's health can affect their ability to work productively and safely, just as work can affect the health of the worker.



Workers with **good health** generally have higher levels of **productivity**, are more **engaged**, and are able to keep working.



Fewer workers with work-related health conditions means fewer working days lost to ill-health, contributing to the **success of your business**.

---

ESTIMATED AVERAGE

**\$44,500**

cost of lost productivity over a typical worker's career for each case of work-related ill-health.

---

ESTIMATED AVERAGE

**\$120m**

annual cost of absences attributed to work-related ill-health

---

## Working together

Managing health in the workplace is more effective if workers are involved with developing and carrying out solutions. You **must** engage with your workers on health matters that directly affect them.

Workers can help to identify risks and help assess and manage practical ways to eliminate or reduce these risks. This will encourage worker commitment to both health and safety.

## Support and more information

Guidance about work-related health and managing health risks can also be found on our website. Call our Contact Centre on 0800 030 040 for information and advice.

