

# Vacuuming

## The task:

Vacuuming large areas



### What's the problem?

Repetitive or sustained awkward postures, such as vacuuming by bending and twisting the back, and reaching forwards and sideways.



### What's the solution?

To reduce bending, twisting and reaching:

- provide mechanised cleaning machines for large floor areas
- provide extendable wand lengths or extra rods/tubes for lengthening wands
- train workers in safe work procedures, for example, adjusting the length of the wand so workers can use the shoulder and elbow in a natural position close to the body, minimising body movement
- train workers to select appropriate vacuum equipment for the task by considering the surface type and area.

# There's a safer way to clean: Vacuuming

## The task:

Picking up objects while vacuuming



### What's the problem?

Repetitive or sustained awkward postures, such as bending to pick up objects on the floor (paper or chewing gum etc) before vacuuming.



### What's the solution?

To reduce bending, provide long-handled brooms and pans or pickers.

## The task:

Vacuuming by pushing and pulling



### What's the problem?

Repetitive or sustained awkward movements, such as vacuuming floors by pushing and pulling the vacuum head.



### What's the solution?

To reduce pushing and pulling, provide:

- a mechanised floor vacuum
- information, instruction and training on vacuuming techniques, for example, 'walking' the vacuum cleaner.

# There's a safer way to clean: Vacuuming

## The task:

Vacuuming  
various surfaces



### What's the problem?

Repetitive or sustained force, such as pushing and pulling the vacuum head across surfaces using force.



### What's the solution?

To avoid using repetitive or sustained force, provide:

- vacuum heads that are appropriate for the floor surface, such as:
  - bristles extended from the head for low carpets or hard floors, to create suction
  - smooth heads for thick carpets
  - combined heads for both floor types
- appropriate vacuum attachments for the surface, for example, upholstery attachments for furniture
- attachments and settings that are easy to change
- information, instruction and training on how to:
  - select and provide appropriate vacuum heads, depending on the floor surface
  - change and fit attachments where appropriate
  - adjust the vacuum vent for the correct level of suction.

# There's a safer way to clean: Vacuuming

## The task:



### Transporting vacuum cleaners

#### What's the problem?

Using high force, such as transporting heavy vacuum cleaners by lifting and carrying them upstairs or between areas.

#### What's the solution?

To reduce high force due to lifting or carrying, provide:

- a vacuum cleaner on each level of a multi-level building, or in each of the areas to be vacuumed
- lightweight vacuum cleaners with functional castors
- suitable vacuum cleaners for areas to be vacuumed, for example, using lightweight stick vacuum cleaners for stairways, light backpack vacuum cleaners with adequate lumbar support and cushioning for stairways and elevated surfaces such as windowsills and doorways
- vacuum cleaners that are easy to empty
- information, instruction and training on how to use vacuum cleaners safely, for example, that vacuum cleaners should be frequently emptied to reduce weight.

## Training tips:

**In addition to introducing the controls above, you should also provide adequate or task specific information, instruction and training to workers. Here are some examples:**

▪ how certain practices can increase the likelihood of injury so that cleaners can avoid awkward postures and actions	<i>example:</i> explain how use of an unsuitable vacuum head that requires force when vacuuming can increase the likelihood of injury
▪ performing tasks safely to avoid injury	<i>example:</i> train cleaners on how to adjust the wand length to reduce bending and twisting of the back, or raising and pulling of the shoulder
▪ the risks associated with vacuuming	<i>example:</i> explain the risks involved with bending, twisting and reaching and how they can be avoided
▪ techniques to vacuum safely and without risk to health, which should be assessed and specific training developed and provided	<i>example:</i> if workers are bending and twisting the back when vacuuming under furniture, provide instructions to face the area and push the vacuum forward under the furniture