

# MSI PREVENTION BULLETIN 4

## Room Cleaning in Health Care

**Cleaning patient and resident rooms** in health-care settings includes scrubbing and wiping horizontal and vertical surfaces and toilets and handling garbage. This bulletin provides information regarding the typical musculoskeletal issues faced by workers performing these tasks and some possible risk control measures to either eliminate or minimize the MSI risk. This information is only a guideline, and the employer must still complete an MSI risk assessment to accurately determine the risks and appropriate control measures applicable to their worksite.

MSI Issue: Cleaning the Toilet	Possible Risk Control Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worker assumes a forward stooped posture when cleaning or plunging the toilet.</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plunger presses into the palm of the worker's hand.</li> <li>• Worker grips the toilet brush more firmly than is required.</li> <li>• Worker bends the wrist when cleaning the toilet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train workers to bend their knees.</li> <li>• Provide kneepads and train workers to squat or kneel safely.</li> <li>• Provide toilet brushes with longer handles.</li> <li>• Train workers to grip the plunger handle so that it doesn't press into the palm.</li> <li>• Pad the end of the plunger handle, or make a "T" on the end of the handle.</li> <li>• Train workers to relax their grip on the toilet brush.</li> <li>• Provide brush handles with good gripping surfaces that are compressible and at an optimal diameter (3–4.6 cm or 1.2–1.8 in.).</li> <li>• Educate workers to avoid a bent wrist as much as possible.</li> <li>• Provide angled toilet brushes for easier cleaning under the rim.</li> <li>• Evaluate cleansers and select a cleanser that requires the least scrubbing force.</li> </ul>



MSI Issue: Cleaning Horizontal and Vertical Surfaces	Possible Risk Control Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worker wrings the cloth with bent wrists and twisted forearms.</li> <li>• Worker squats or kneels to reach and clean items.</li> <li>• Worker holds a cloth in the hand for prolonged periods of time.</li> <li>• Worker applies excessive force with a cloth to clean areas.</li> <li>• Worker bends the wrist when cleaning tables.</li> <li>• When cleaning vertical surfaces, the worker reaches up with the arm away from the body, resulting in an awkward shoulder posture.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="165 1262 506 1514" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="542 1262 883 1514" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worker squats or kneels to clean wheelchairs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize the amount of hand wringing by ensuring cleaning cloths are not dripping.</li> <li>• Train workers to squeeze the cloth with a neutral forearm posture (shown in picture below).</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1024 478 1365 730" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide kneepads or foam to allow workers to kneel safely on hard floors.</li> <li>• Train workers to switch arms and stretch hands periodically.</li> <li>• Provide a scrub brush for workers to use when extra force is required.</li> <li>• Train workers to switch arms and to avoid excessive force and a bent wrist.</li> <li>• Provide safe step-stools, ladders, or long-handled but lightweight tools to ensure the arm remains close to the body.</li> <li>• Train workers to switch arms.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a ramp for wheelchairs to be placed at worker's hip height.</li> <li>• Provide kneepads or foam to allow workers to kneel safely on hard floors.</li> </ul>



MSI Issue: Handling Garbage	Possible Risk Control Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worker lifts garbage up and out of the housekeeping cart with the arms away from the body.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the garbage collection cart allows for garbage to be removed without lifting straight up, such as by releasing the garbage from below.</li> </ul> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worker stoops, squats, or kneels on hard floor to replace garbage bags.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train workers to raise the garbage can onto a higher surface (but not high enough to result in an awkward shoulder posture).</li> <li>Eliminate tying the bag onto the can.</li> <li>Provide kneepads or foam to allow workers to kneel safely.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worker carries garbage bags long distances.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a cart to move bags of garbage.</li> </ul> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worker tosses or throws large garbage bags into an outside dumpster.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate the dumpster and garbage takeout areas close enough to eliminate the need to throw or toss garbage.</li> <li>Raise the garbage takeout area above the ground level, making the opening to the dumpster at workers' knee height. Where guardrails are required, install a self-closing gate for easier access.</li> </ul>