

Exercise Professional / ACC Best practice guidelines for injury prevention and management



**Exercise
Association
of New Zealand**

Representing the Exercise & Fitness Industry

Welcome to the New Zealand Exercise Association best practice guide for exercise professionals, to assist you with injury prevention and management. This best practice guide is designed to give you some basic information to help you get started, and to offer some key tools.

Meeting obligations under Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) to manage legal obligations are referred to in brief in these guidelines but we recommend you also seek further information to ensure all your obligations under this act are met. The Exercise Association has resources available to members to assist meeting obligations. This best practice guide is designed to allow clients and participants to safely exercise with you to reach their goals.

ACC STATS on exercise

- There were nearly 40,000 new claims for fitness training and gym related injuries in 2013. This is 9% of sports claims.
- Emerging fitness activities are only making a small contribution to the increase, most of it is coming from increased participation in general.
- 59% of injuries to young men were categorised as “lifting carrying and strain”. This is most often from lifting weights.
- 37 % of injuries to middle aged women are loss of balance or personal control most often associated with gym classes such as Aerobics, Zumba, Yoga, Pilates and Boxing.



Prescreening

The first step to preventing and managing injuries is to know about a client’s background, including health and medical details and strength, flexibility and movement competency.

A comprehensive prescreen will allow you to specifically find out about previous injuries and other factors allowing you to:

1. Identify key risk factors
2. Identify other key medical / physical condition information
3. Determine information to support safe programme design
4. Record assessment/test results that may influence programming

Research is quite clear that for most individuals the benefits of low-to-moderate intensity exercise substantially outweighs any risks. In fact, there is even greater risk of an individual remaining sedentary compared to starting low-to- moderate intensity exercise.

We recommend using the REPs Pre-Exercise Screening form, which is available for all REPs registered individuals and facilities. There are also specific pre-screening processes and forms for both Yoga (The Yoga Readiness Questionnaire) and occasional/casual visitors (The Casual User Form).

To access the pre-screening forms, risk stratification guide and templates registered individuals can log on at www.reps.org.nz. If log in unavailable or for unregistered trainers contact REPs direct for more information.

Regardless of screening forms used, ensure data is maintained and stored to meet obligations under the Health and safety in workplace act (2015) and the Privacy Act (1993).

Exercise Training Habits that can prevent injury:

Appropriate warm-up & cool-down

A warm-up prepares a client both physically and mentally for exercise to decrease the chance of injury by increasing blood flow to muscles, increasing body temperature and mobility connective tissue. Warm up exercises need to be suitable for not only the activity undertaken, but also the individual(s) undertaking it, and may include elements that increase blood flow as well as mobility exercises to increase range of motion needed for upcoming activities.

Mobility exercises performed after an exercise session assist with posture, function, performance and post exercise recovery.

If we don’t stretch muscles post exercising they can become tight, prone to injury and lacking normal range of movement. As with the warm up, the type of post exercise activities may vary depending on factors such as the activities just undertaken, the level of intensity, the individuals undertaking the activity, and the ambient temperature (the latter being more of an issue in the winter and/or outdoors).

Adherence to prescribed exercise

The FITT principles are an effective way to ensure training is safe and appropriate for an individual under your care.

F- Frequency

Prescribing sessions regularly enough to gain benefits, and enough recovery time between sessions for adequate rest to reduce tiredness and fatigue in further sessions.

I- Intensity

Prescribing exercise at a level that improves fitness without exposing to risk of injury due to load that client is not prepared.

T- Time

Prescribing sessions long enough to get a training effect, without fatigue affecting technique. Generally, a high intensity session will be shorter to reduce fatigue

T- Type

Ensuring that the exercise type prescribed for an individual fits their exercise history, health profile and goals.

Correct exercise form and technique

To be able to perform exercises safely it is important that correct technique is taught, and monitored during an exercise session.

People with poor technique may not be aware of this so will need to be coached and alternatives given when an exercise cannot be performed well consistently.

Depending on the nature of your role (ie; PT, group fitness instructor or Yoga Teacher) your scope of practice and/ or the nature of the activity being undertaken may either allow for immediate personal feedback to the client (as would be the case with many 1:1 PT sessions), or a more generic 'safety tip' for the group, or something in between (some instructors may have the opportunity to correct form 1:1 but not during the entire class/session). This should be factored into any safety briefing given at the start of the activity, so participants know what to expect, and why it's important to listen to safety instructions during the activity. Where there is concern about imminent serious harm to an individual, an exercise professional should always take immediate action.

Informed consent/ Client release

The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights establishes the rights of consumers, and the obligations and duties of providers to comply with the Code. It is a regulation under the Health and Disability Commissioner Act.

<https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/code-of-health-and-disability-services-consumers-rights/>

Using a waiver or client release to claim no responsibility for injury or accident is unenforceable, it could also be seen negatively by Worksafe and regarded as misleading by consumer law regulatory agencies.

Waivers and releases can be used for other purposes, but it's important that when considering health and safety that they do not imply less liability or responsibility than the law provides.

Exercise New Zealand has a range of forms and templates for use to meet obligations when contracting clients or members. Exercise NZ members can log in at www.exercisenz.org.nz. If log in unavailable or for non-members contact ExerciseNZ direct for more information.

Environment

Wherever you are operating as an exercise professional, the responsibility for managing health and safety is your business. This includes multi-use centres, dedicated exercise facilities, private studios and spaces, community halls or outdoor settings.

In a larger facility, you will work with others to meet these obligations, in other situations you are likely to be responsible for all aspects on your own.

Be particularly aware of new surroundings, as these may have new, as yet unidentified hazards or risks. This is particularly true of outdoor spaces, as well as any space that is shared by groups that are not exercise based (as their needs may be different to yours).

Identify Hazards

Complete pre-checks on exercise environment e.g.: checking equipment in a facility or looking for glass and removing it in an outdoors environment.

Many exercise professionals comment that they perform a 'mental check list' at times (examples being before starting a group activity in a rented/public space, or when seeing a client for the first time). It is useful to make this into a written check list that forms part of your health & safety practice and record keeping.

Assess risks

You can assess the risks associated with identified hazards, using a risk matrix framework.

The idea of a matrix is that it is used to determine the overall risk of a hazard by cross referencing how damaging the outcome of an incident would be and how likely it is to happen.

Hazard controls

The purpose of hazard controls is to reduce the level of residual* risk to as low as reasonably practicable. Controls are introduced to safeguard people in the most effective and practical way. Ideally controls should endeavour to eliminate the hazard, but if this is not practicable, then they should target the hazard source (e.g. put a guard on equipment), and the people that are exposed (e.g. procedure, training and behaviour).

** residual risk is the level of risk from the hazard after you have put in place controls.*

Monitor control methods

Any hazard that has not been eliminated must be reviewed regularly to ensure the implemented controls are continuously effective.

Some areas to consider

- Footwear and clothing
- Collars and security devices used on large equipment
- Checks for wear and tear on portable equipment such as balls and bands
- Equipment storage during and between sessions
- Shared usage of space, either with other exercisers or members of the public
- Casual clients- what pre-screen is needed, what extra risks are there?
- Group sessions – how to accommodate diverse fitness/ability levels safely
- Client/ trainer ratios. How many clients can you have in a session without additional support? In a facility, this may be other staff members, when working in an independent location this will not be available.

Allied Health/ Scope

As an exercise professional, you have a scope of practice which you will work within, and allied health professionals you will work with. This means that there are areas in which you are 'the expert' or qualified in, and other areas where another professional, such as a physio or GP will be required.

In the case of a pre-existing injury in a new client this may mean that to prescribe a safe exercise programme you will need to get clearance and advice from the professional who diagnosed, and/or is caring for their injury.

If an injury occurs, along with your health and safety reporting obligations you will need to ensure the injured individual is referred to receive appropriate care and support.

Responding to injury

Near miss

A near miss is where an event did not result in injury, illness or damage but had the potential to do so. Near misses need to be recorded on your incident report forms. Recording near-misses is important so that when you review your records of combined near-misses and accidents/incidents, any trends will be more apparent. Use any near-misses as an opportunity to re-review how a particular hazard is managed, and then put in place action to prevent/minimise any future injury events from occurring.

If an injury occurs

Maintaining current first aid registration is mandatory for all REPs registered exercise professionals (or CPR for those inside a registered facility), to ensure that should an event occur the professional is able to respond immediately and responsibly. Best practice recommends all people working in an exercise environment with individuals or groups maintain a current first aid certification.

Further management tools can be implemented in preparation for an event or injury:

- Carrying a cellphone at all times
- Being prepared with a first aid kit
- Having a plan for group sessions, in cases where exercise is to continue for unaffected participants and what to do if the session needs to stop



Following an injury or event

Incidents, injuries, illness and near accidents (near miss) will need to be recorded and referred, depending on type and level.

- ALL incidents, regardless of seriousness, should be recorded on an Incident Report Form.
- If a notifiable event* or incident has occurred under the health and safety act then relevant procedure will need to be followed for notification with Worksafe.
- Appropriate referral made for injuries not requiring immediate medical assistance, this could be a doctor, physiotherapist, local medical centre or somewhere else.

**A notifiable event is one that causes a serious injury, illness or incident that has happened to a person or people carrying out work, or as a result of work that your business or organisation is responsible for.*

For a more detailed definition, and a detailed outline of this process, visit <https://worksafe.govt.nz/notify-worksafe/injury/>

Return to exercise

Return to exercise post injury will depend on the level of injury and other individual circumstances.

- In cases of an injury or incident requiring medical or allied health support a clearance to return to exercise may be required.
- Initial health screen should be updated to add any new information
- Ongoing allied health communication may be required, with physio or relevant professional working with injured party.



LINKS and references

There are many resources mentioned in this guide that will help you to ensure your practices both comply with the law, but also are safe and effective for your clients/customers/ attendees.

Attached to this guide are:

- A gear and safety event form (used when an incident or near miss occurs)
- A hazard report form (used as a part of the identification and management of any hazards)
- Quick health & safety check list for self-employed exercise professionals.

Additional resources available from REPs and ExerciseNZ:

- REPs Pre-screen forms and guide (including Yoga and casual user)*
- ExerciseNZ guide for Health & Safety for exercise professionals*
- Sample PT - Clients agreement forms with appropriate disclaimers*
- Membership agreement guide, and sample membership agreement**

* Free for REPs registered exercise professionals

** Free for ExerciseNZ members

Instructions

Manager and person reporting incident to complete this form. If serious harm has occurred, please FREEZE the accident scene and notify the Site Manager who will notify WorkSafe New Zealand (0800 20 90 20).

Print form

Clear form

Event date: Event time: Date reported: Reported by:

Business area: Specific location:

Who was involved:

Event type: Incident Near Accident Hazardous Situation

Description of the incident:

Work Safe notifiable Event type: Notifiable Injury / Illness Notifiable Incident

Immediate actions taken:

Actual consequences:

Safety <input type="radio"/> First Aid <input type="radio"/> Medical treatment <input type="radio"/> Restricted work <input type="radio"/> Permanent disability <input type="radio"/> Fatality	Value <input type="radio"/> >\$1,000 <input type="radio"/> \$1,000 - \$10,000 <input type="radio"/> \$10,000 - \$50,000 <input type="radio"/> \$50,000 - \$200,000 <input type="radio"/> \$200,000 +	Environment <input type="radio"/> Release contained <input type="radio"/> Minor local contamination <input type="radio"/> Major local contamination <input type="radio"/> Severe damage	Reputation <input type="radio"/> Poor feedback received <input type="radio"/> Minor service complaint <input type="radio"/> Formal service complaint <input type="radio"/> Loss of customer <input type="radio"/> Loss of multiple customers
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Potential consequence of incident: First Aid Insignificant Medical treatment Minor Restricted work Moderate Permanent disability Major Fatality Catastrophic

Injured person details (If injury has occurred)

Person's name:

Employee Contractor Visitor

Job title:

Shift period: Day Night Hours worked into shift:

Date of birth:

Male Female

Details of the injury

Body Part (Select one) <input type="radio"/> Head <input type="radio"/> Lower Back <input type="radio"/> Eyes <input type="radio"/> Stomach <input type="radio"/> Neck <input type="radio"/> Internal Organs <input type="radio"/> Shoulder <input type="radio"/> Upper Leg <input type="radio"/> Arm <input type="radio"/> Knee <input type="radio"/> Wrist <input type="radio"/> Lower Leg <input type="radio"/> Hand <input type="radio"/> Foot or Toe <input type="radio"/> Finger <input type="radio"/> Multiple Locations <input type="radio"/> Upper Back <input type="radio"/>	Agency (Select one) <input type="radio"/> Animal, Human or Biological Agency Other Than Bacterial or Virus <input type="radio"/> Bacteria or Virus <input type="radio"/> Chemical or Chemical Product <input type="radio"/> Environmental Exposure <input type="radio"/> Machinery or fixed plant <input type="radio"/> Material or Substance <input type="radio"/> Mobile Plant or Transport <input type="radio"/> Non Powered Hand Tool, or Appliance <input type="radio"/> Powered Equipment, Tool or Appliance	Nature of Injury or Illness or Disease (Select one) <input type="radio"/> Amputation <input type="radio"/> Mental Disorder <input type="radio"/> Bruising or Crushing <input type="radio"/> Multiple injuries <input type="radio"/> Burns or Scalds <input type="radio"/> Musculoskeletal System <input type="radio"/> Circulatory System <input type="radio"/> Nervous System <input type="radio"/> Digestion System <input type="radio"/> Other <input type="radio"/> Dislocation <input type="radio"/> Poisoning or Toxic <input type="radio"/> Foreign Body <input type="radio"/> Respiration <input type="radio"/> Fractures <input type="radio"/> Scratch/Abrasion <input type="radio"/> Infectious or Parasitic <input type="radio"/> Skin <input type="radio"/> Internal Injury <input type="radio"/> Sprain/Strain <input type="radio"/> Laceration/Cut
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Mechanism: (Select one)

Fall, trip or slip Body Stressing Biological Factors Being Hit by Moving Objects
 Sound or Pressure Mental Stress Hitting Object with Part of Body Heat, Radiation or Energy Chemicals or Other Substances

Print form

Clear form

Section 1: Details of the hazard

Hazard Name:

Reported by: Manager name:

Business Area: Site: Date:

Location or task:

How can harm occur:

Section 2: Hazard Risk Assessment

5. Almost Certain	LIKELIHOOD	M ⁸	H ¹⁴	VH ²⁰	VH ²²	VH ²⁵
4. Likely		M ⁷	M ¹⁰	H ¹⁵	VH ²¹	VH ²⁴
3. Good Possibility		L ³	M ⁹	M ¹²	H ¹⁷	VH ²³
2. Possibility		L ²	L ⁵	M ¹¹	H ¹⁶	H ¹⁹
1. Highly Unlikely		L ¹	L ⁴	L ⁶	M ¹³	H ¹⁸
		CONSEQUENCES				
		1. Not Significant	2. Minor	3. Moderate	4. Major	5. Catastrophic

Initial Risk Rating:

Residual Risk Rating:

- VH** = Very High (range from 20 - 25)
- H** = High Risk (range from 14 - 19)
- M** = Moderate Risk (range from 7-13)
- L** = Low Risk (range from 1 - 6)

Note: Any hazard with a consequence score of equal to or greater than 4 is regarded as a 'significant hazard.'

Section 3: Hazard control actions

Hazards must be managed following the hierarchy of controls, please select and describe the control/s that have been used

Eliminated | Substituted
 Isolated | Engineering
 Administration | PPE

Description of control measure/s:

Description of control measure/s:

Description of control measure/s:

Actions recommended by: Date:

Section 4: Hazard control implementation verification

The identified control actions have been completed/implemented in a satisfactory manner and the Residual Risk Score is correct

Yes
 No
 Manager's signature:

Quick health & safety checklist for self employed Exercise Professionals in New Zealand

A QUICK CHECKLIST to ensure you have the essential practices in place to protect your customers, and comply with New Zealand health & safety law.

How to use this guide:

Check the items below, and review each for

- 1) Understanding – do you fully understand the item?
- 2) Practice – do have this in place for your business and apply it consistently?
- 3) Proof – can you easily demonstrate the above two items (you may be asked to do so by WorkSafe).

STEP 1: Key Concepts

Health & safety is about taking all **practical and reasonable steps** to ensure the health & safety of yourself, fellow workers, and your clients.

As a self employed person, you are a **person conducting a business or undertaking** (PCBU). All PCBUs have specific responsibilities that are significantly above and beyond those of an employee. If you operate from within someone else's facility, then they are a PCBU too, and there are specific requirements as to how PCBUs need to work together for health & safety.

www.exercisenz.org.nz
www.reps.org.nz

Disclaimer: This one page guide is not a replacement for professional health & safety advice. It is designed to be used as a quick check list by exercise professionals to identify gaps, and places to get further support. It is free to be distributed, as long as it is done so in its entirety.

STEP 2: Minimum Requirements

Specific things you must have in place include:

- a) **An incident log** – keep a record of all accidents, (injury or not) and near misses. Know what details need to be recorded, and what follow up needs to be done.
- b) **Reporting incidents to WorkSafe** – understand what types of incidents need so be reported direct to WorkSafe, including by when, and how to do this.
- c) **Risk / hazard review** – undertake this on a regular basis, and include what you have done about risk/hazard. This requires an understanding of how to prioritise risks, and the various controls you can have to address them, and what order they should be applied in. This process may also include developing checklists for safety reviews (such as each time an outdoor space is used, or each time a new client starts).
- d) **Documentation** – including (a)-(c) above, as well as sample forms used in step 3 below.

STEP 3: Industry Specific Items

- a) **Pre-screening** – all clients must be pre-screened. We recommend the REPs pre-screening form as industry best practice. Ensure this also covers what to do in various scenarios (when do you refer for medical check etc?).
- b) **Suitability of exercise / forms etc** – Ensure exercise recommendations are appropriate for the person (post-pre-screening) and that this is documented.
- c) **Safe exercise space** – the review in 2(c) should pick up and address major risks/hazards, and also help develop check lists that ensure an exercise space is safe before using it (especially those you don't control such as a park, or rented space).
- d) **Meeting industry standards** – make sure you follow industry best practice when it comes to your own professional development – we recommend registration with the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) as it is a third party verification of not only initial competency, but also of on-going education proving you keep up to date. It also ensure you are provided with information on law changes, and access to resources from both ExerciseNZ and REPs.

Where to get further help

If the answer is 'NO' to any of the above, then there are many steps you can take, including – reviewing the WorkSafe web-site, reviewing ExerciseNZ's comprehensive guide for exercise professionals on health & safety (free to REPs registered exercise professionals) or engaging the services of a health & safety expert.

