

# Musculoskeletal Disorders

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD's) are injuries or disorders that affect the musculoskeletal system of the body which is responsible for human movement. The structures affected can include bones, joints, tendons, muscles, nerves and connective tissue. This can result in conditions of the back, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, hips, legs and feet.

## How do they present?

Depending on the cause, some of the symptoms and signs of MSDs can include:

- ❖ Swelling
- ❖ Aches, pain and cramps
- ❖ Pins and needles or tingling
- ❖ Muscle weakness
- ❖ Reduced flexibility of joints
- ❖ Inability to undertake daily activities e.g. walking, dressing and household chores
- ❖ Inability to work or undertake certain aspects of the job role

## How are MSDs diagnosed and managed?

An assessment may be undertaken by a physiotherapist or doctor to determine your diagnosis and management plan. This assessment typically includes a detailed medical history, a physical examination, and possibly some diagnostic tests.

Management of MSDs can vary depending on the severity and specific condition but generally include:

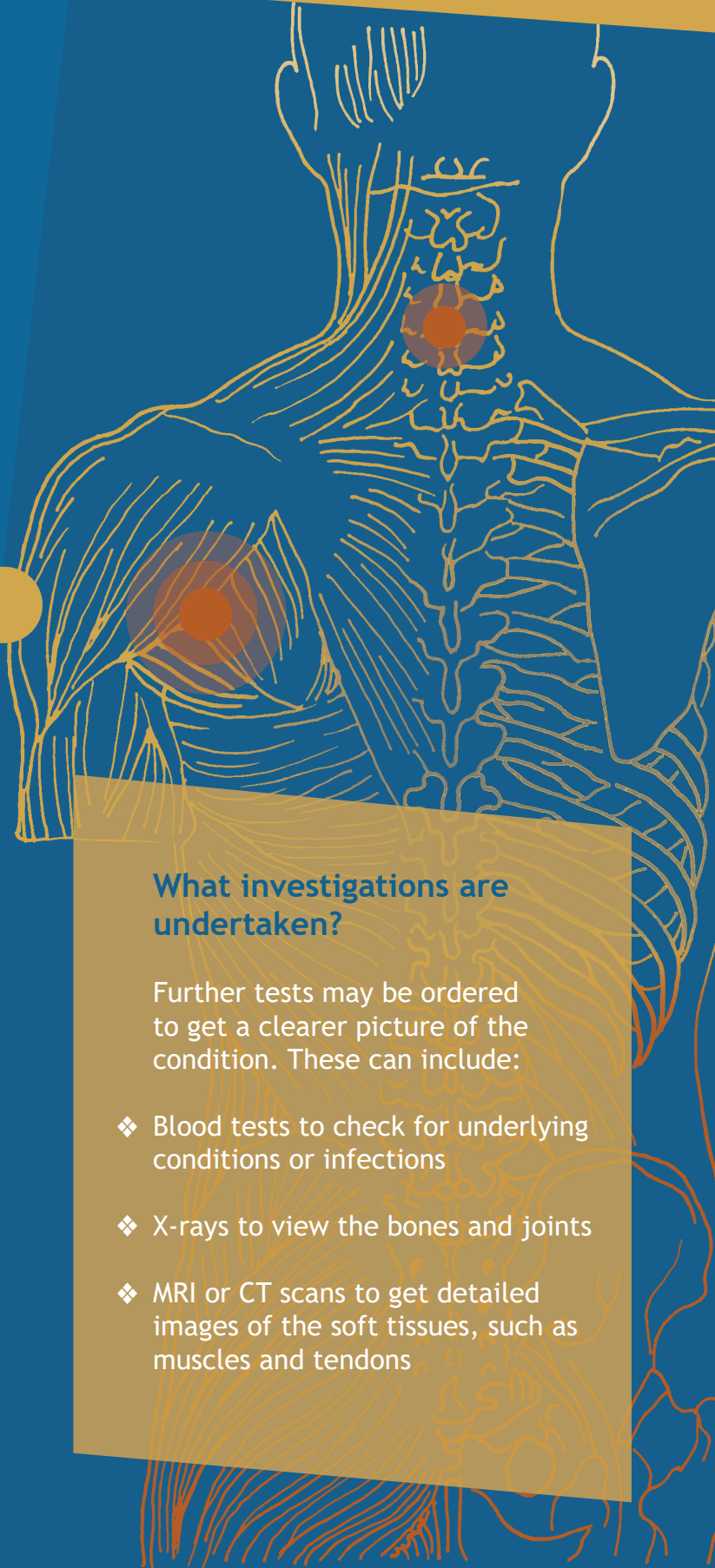
- ❖ Advice and guidance on self-management of the condition
- ❖ Prevention strategies to avoid further injury
- ❖ An exercise program tailored to the individual's needs
- ❖ Pain management techniques
- ❖ Medication to reduce pain and inflammation
- ❖ Injections to alleviate pain and inflammation in specific areas

In complex cases, surgery may be considered to correct structural issues or relieve severe symptoms.

## What investigations are undertaken?

Further tests may be ordered to get a clearer picture of the condition. These can include:

- ❖ Blood tests to check for underlying conditions or infections
- ❖ X-rays to view the bones and joints
- ❖ MRI or CT scans to get detailed images of the soft tissues, such as muscles and tendons



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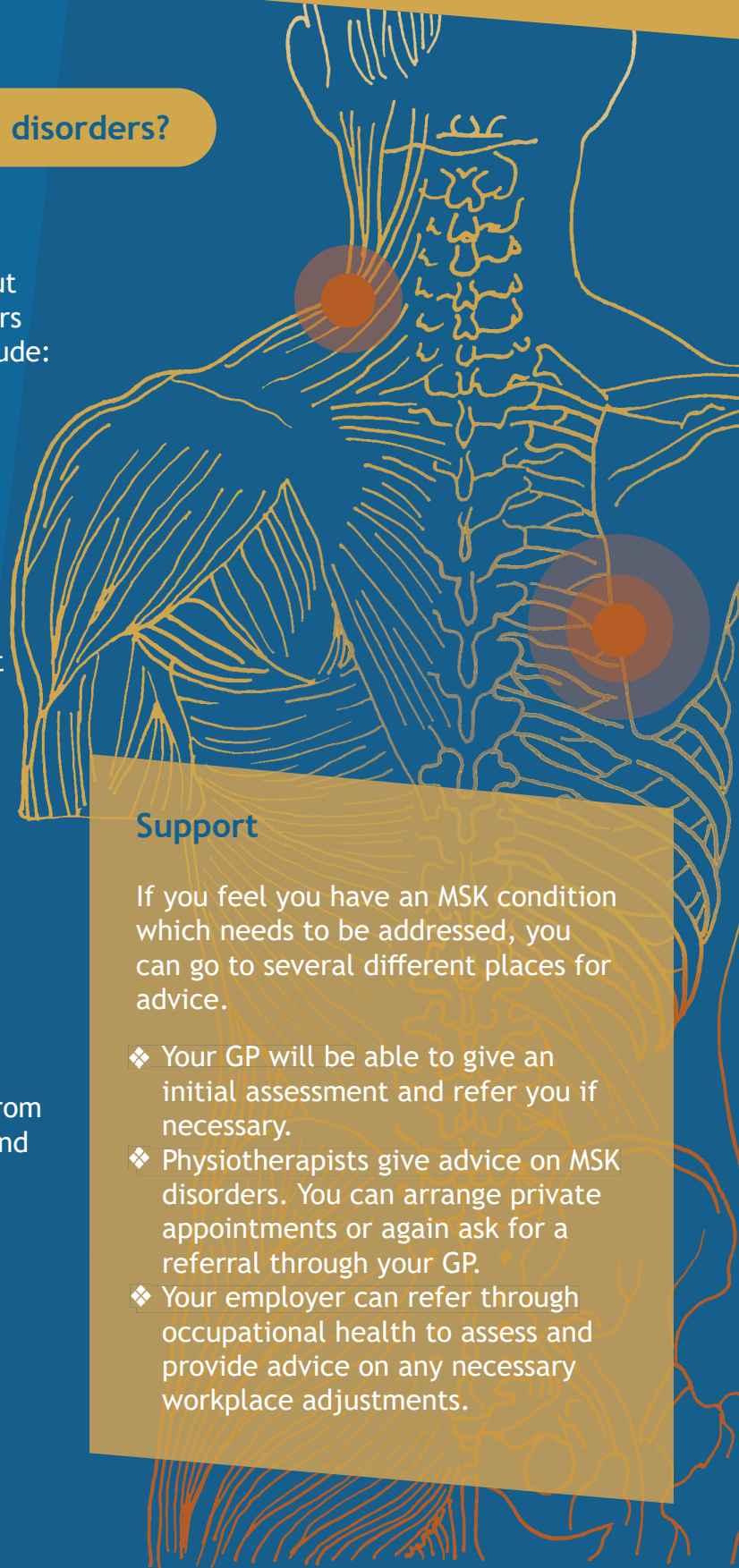
## What are work-related musculoskeletal disorders?

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders can develop in an occupational setting due to the activities undertaken by individuals carrying out their day-to-day work activities. These disorders can be associated with work patterns that include:

- ❖ Fixed or constrained body positions
- ❖ Continual repetition of movements
- ❖ Force concentrated on small parts of the body, such as the hand or wrist
- ❖ A pace of work that does not allow sufficient recovery between movements

In addition, workplace psychosocial factors such as organisational culture, the health and safety climate and human factors may create the conditions for work related MSDs to occur. Work related MSDs tend to have multifactorial contributing factors. Generally, none of the above factors act separately to cause work related MSDs.

Figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) indicate that 543,000 workers suffered from work-related musculoskeletal disorders (new and long-standing) in 2023/24. This resulted in 7.8 million working days lost due to work-related musculoskeletal disorders in 2023/24.



## Support

If you feel you have an MSK condition which needs to be addressed, you can go to several different places for advice.

- ❖ Your GP will be able to give an initial assessment and refer you if necessary.
- ❖ Physiotherapists give advice on MSK disorders. You can arrange private appointments or again ask for a referral through your GP.
- ❖ Your employer can refer through occupational health to assess and provide advice on any necessary workplace adjustments.