



BODY MAPPING

A resource for SoR Health and Safety Representatives



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What is it?

The technique of body mapping is a form of participatory research which has been developed by academics and trade unions in North America, primarily in the Canadian casino industry. The technique is supported by the TUC and Health and Safety Executive and has been validated and published in peer reviewed journals^{(1), (2)}.

It is a tool that helps to get members talking about the effects of work on their health and enables health and safety representatives to identify clusters of common problems and their causes. It is particularly useful for identifying musculoskeletal problems which can be fed back to managers along with any solutions identified by members.

Why?

Sometimes members can be reluctant to report aches and pains. They may think that they are the only ones suffering and may not want to be identified or singled out by management. Body mapping gives members an understanding of shared risk factors, provides anonymity, gives all the workforce a voice and can help develop practical solutions.

Body mapping does not and should not take the place of incident forms. Health and safety representatives should still encourage members to complete incident forms following accidents or incidents of pain following work.

How to do it

There is nothing difficult about body mapping. A body map is a chart showing the front and back view of a body. Using coloured stickers or pens, members doing a particular type of job (e.g. ultrasonography or mammography) are encouraged to mark on the chart where they suffer pain or injury while they are working.

Different coloured pens or stickers can be used to identify different problems e.g.

- **Orange** for aches and pains (not debilitating and usually gone a few hours after the shift)
- **Green** for symptoms of pins and needles and numbness
- **Blue** for shooting pains
- **Red** for continuous muscle pains (i.e. pain that doesn't go away even when away from work for a day or two)

There are three alternative ways to carry out body mapping. By far the best way is to enlarge the chart and get a group of workers to fill it in together. Once they start talking to each other, members are quick to spot common problems and often can come up with practical solutions as well. In order to identify clusters and to make it manageable, a group of 10 to 20 is best.

If you have difficulties in getting a group of members together. You could also use the technique by giving every member a chart to complete on their own. Alternatively you can put it up on the SoR notice board with instructions for use. However both these methods are less effective as the real benefits of body mapping is bringing a group of members together to get them talking about shared problems and identifying solutions.

At the end of the exercise it should be possible to identify any significant problems. Clear clusters may emerge showing that many people doing the same job are suffering similar symptoms. This evidence along with suggested causes and solutions from participant can be taken to the manager and used to inform risk assessments and associated action plans.

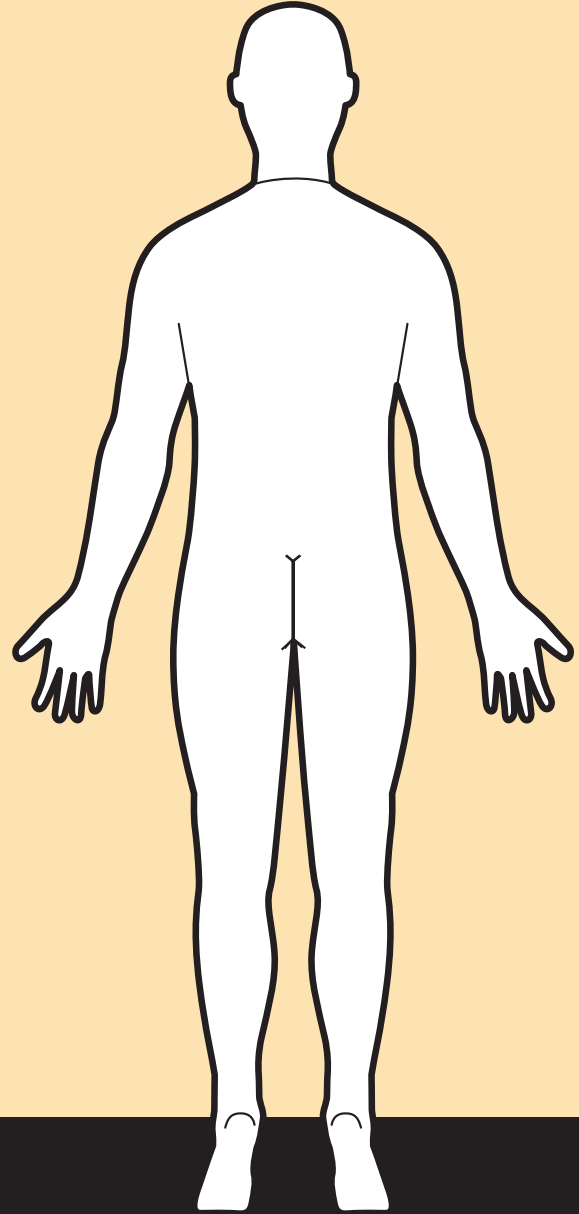
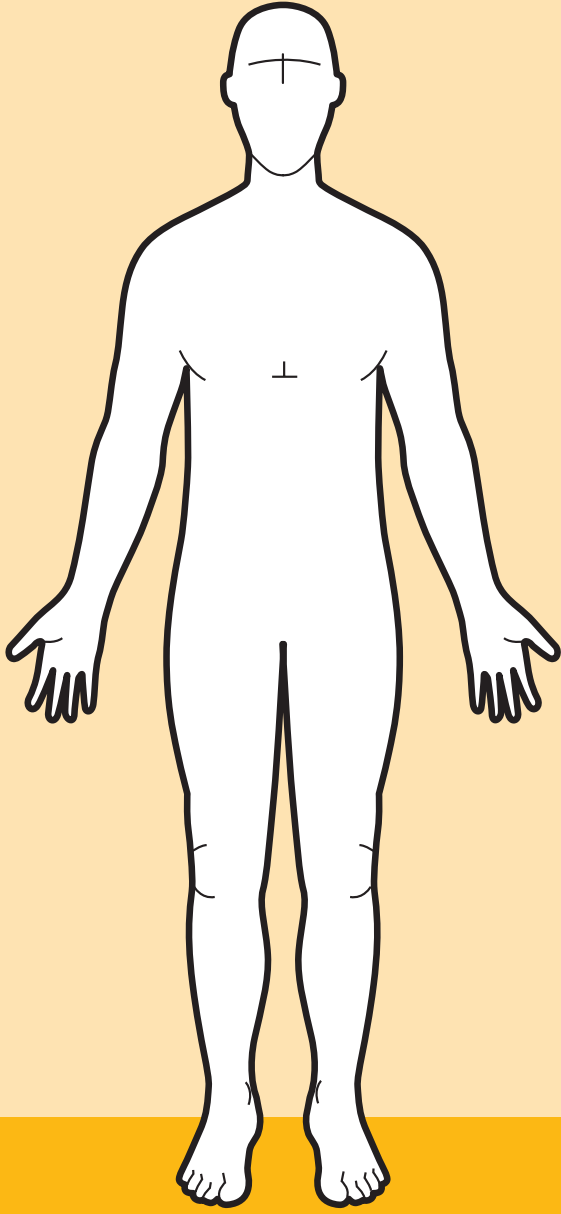
It is also important to let members who take part see the results of the exercise. If any improvements are introduced following discussion with the manager, make sure members are informed about them and continue to monitor the situation with the members to make sure that they really do work. Body mapping could be re-visited following the implementation of improvements.

Using the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977

Under Regulation 4 of the *Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977*, accredited SoR health and safety representatives can investigate potential hazards, complaints by employees and causes of accidents and ill health. Carrying out a body mapping session is a way of investigating complaints so reps may legitimately negotiate facilities time to meet with members and carry out an exercise and prepare feedback to the employer.

Body Mapping Chart

The body mapping chart on the next page can be handed out to members or enlarged to A3 size for use with group or on a notice board.



Front

Back

REFERENCES

- ⁽¹⁾ Keith M ; Brophy J (2004) Participatory mapping of occupational hazards and disease among asbestos-exposed workers from a foundry and insulation complex in Canada. International journal of occupational and environmental health 10 (2):144-153
- ⁽²⁾ Keith M; Cann B; Brophy J (2001) Identifying and prioritising gaming workers' health and safety concerns using mapping for data collection. American Journal of Industrial Medicine, 39:45-21

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