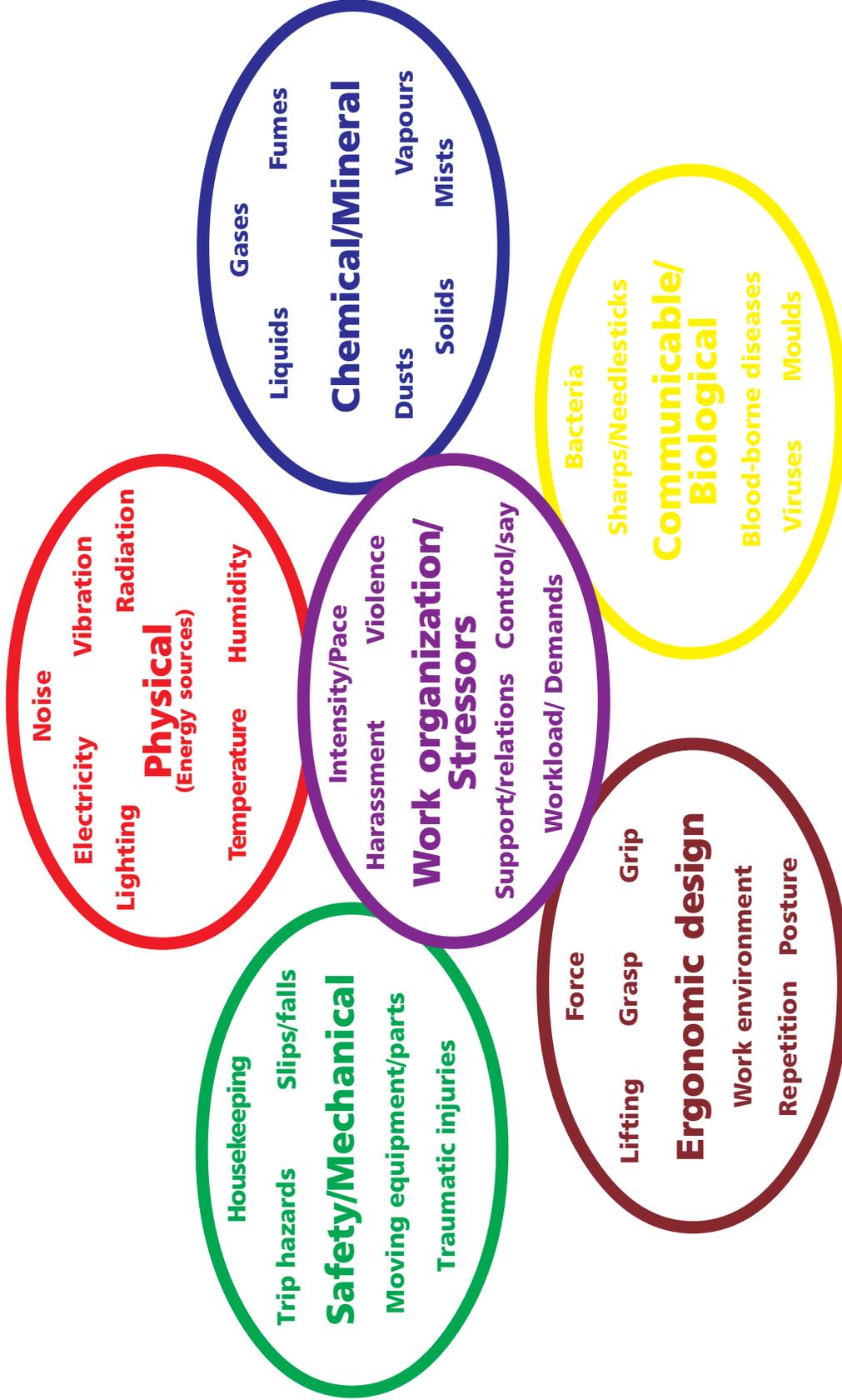




Hazards - the problems behind our symptoms



Hazard categories

Chemical hazards include: gases, liquids and solids, and the things into which they can be changed. Note that vapours are the gaseous form of liquids, and fumes are very small, airborne, solid particles formed by the cooling of a very hot vapour. Smaller than dusts, fumes are more easily breathed into the lungs. Therefore there are paint vapours and welding fumes. It matters when you use respirators or design ventilation systems.

Communicable/Biological hazards aren't just found in hospitals or personal care homes. They're the "bugs" we have to deal with when we come in contact with others, moulds, sharps (also found in other jobs than health care), etc.

Ergonomic design hazards, sometimes called biomechanical hazards, involve problems with the design and organisation of work. Ergonomics can be defined as the "law of work", in which the key is to *fit the job to the worker, not the other way around*. It's about how much people are expected to do with their bodies and brains; as a Canadian ergonomist says, workers are expected to do things on the job that robots do not do.

These hazards usually affect our musculoskeletal system - they cause aches and pains. However, they also include such things as the design of equipment controls or operating systems. So there also can be effects on our ability to see, concentrate, use operating equipment/computers, etc. Some ergonomic hazards are considered physical hazards in other circumstances.

Physical hazards are not the physical symptoms of an illness or injury or something that is visible. They are hazards from energy sources. Compare them with safety/mechanical hazards. This category includes the hazards associated with indoor air problems.

Safety/Mechanical hazards are the slip, trip, fall type of hazards. They include machinery with moving parts. They are not physical hazards.

Work organization hazards or **stressors** cause us stress (short-term effects) and strain (long-term or chronic effects). They are related to how much say we have about any part of our work, how hard we work, how much we have to do (workload), what kind of social relationships there are at work, what kinds of rewards we get for our efforts, the threat of violence, lack of respect, etc.

