

BACK INJURY PREVENTION

Your back is in motion all day, every day, even when you sleep. It bends when you sit, twists when you turn, lifts when you stand and supports you when you walk. An injured back can be uncomfortable or it can be disabling. Back injuries are one of the most common causes of work-related disability. Back pain is the second-leading cause of lost work days, after the common cold. Once back strain occurs, it often returns. By learning a few back injury prevention techniques, you may be able make your work day safer.

Here are a few tips:

- When you are driving, make sure your back is well-supported and that you use good posture.
- When you have to lift an object, always plan ahead. Decide how you are going to pick up the load, carry it and set it down, and then check the route for obstructions. Always get assistance if the load is too heavy or too awkward.
- You're more likely to have a back injury if you're in poor physical condition, overweight, under stress, have poor posture, or overexert yourself. Regular exercise can strengthen back and stomach muscles. Be realistic about what you can carry and what you can do; overdoing can cause lasting damage. Sit and stand straight; poor posture strains the back.
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- Back strain is a most common type of lifting injury. It results from the over stretching of certain muscles and can be avoided by employing correct lifting techniques and asking for help when having to move something heavy and/or awkward.
- Avoid twisting your body when lifting or carrying. Move your feet to change direction. Never lift from an unbalanced position. This means no lifting from one knee or reaching over another object to lift. Never carry a load that blocks your view ahead.
- Be sure of a safe, firm grip. Lift with your legs, not your back. Squat down close to the load; keep your back straight; lift slowly with leg power.
- Use material handling equipment whenever possible. When properly used it can save a lot of manual effort.
- Check with your supervisor or co-worker if you have any questions about moving a load.

- Before you make a lift stretch and bend gently to loosen muscles.
- Always consult your doctor before starting an exercise program.

Lifting safely is one the most important things you can do to protect your back throughout your lifetime.

Content Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (Users of Safety Talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations).

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