

Preventing Back Injuries

Back injuries are one of the most common workplace maladies. It's not surprising that there are so many back injuries. Your back is involved in almost every move you make during any given day. Among other things, your back helps you:

- Stand up
- Sit down
- Bend
- Reach
- Turn to the side
- Push or pull
- Lift and carry

All that work puts a lot of strain on your back, and one false move can lead to an injury.

The good news is that back injuries are preventable. Simple precautions can keep your back safe:

- Keep your back strong and fit with exercise and a healthy lifestyle. (Being overweight and out of shape significantly increases the risk of back injury.)
- Maintain good posture by keeping your ears, shoulders, and hips aligned when sitting, standing, or walking.
- Be aware of your back every time you move, and avoid awkward movements.
- Use good body mechanics when you lift.

Here are some back-saver tips:

- Use material-handling aids such as carts, dollies, hand trucks, and pallet jacks to handle heavy loads.
- Use your legs and knees when lifting objects (Even light-weight objects).
- Bend your knees and lift with your legs when shoveling.
- Use leverage to increase strength and save your back.
- Split big loads into smaller loads that are easier to carry, or get help if the load is too big for one worker to safely handle.
- Bend your knees and squat down when working low, rather than bending at your waist.
- Avoid jumps from heights...even modest ones...such as loading docks, trucks, or platforms (The shock could hurt the back).
- Push rather than pull loads.
- Drive with your back firmly supported against the back of the seat, adjust the lumbar support, and knees bent and slightly higher than your hips.
- Avoid overreaching when reaching for objects.

When we share the responsibility for safety in the workplace, everyone wins!!