



# Weekly Safety Meeting

---

## Prevention of Back Injuries

Back injuries are the most common injury in the workplace and the cause of most missed work time. The injury can be caused by a strain, spasm, or sprain to the ligaments or muscles of the back. This can happen due to lifting something that's too heavy or over-extending (overstretching) the back. If the spine suffers from strain or compression, it can cause rupture or bulging of the discs. This assault to the disc can create extreme pain and pressure on one of more than fifty spinal nerves.

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. By learning a few back injury prevention techniques, you may be able make your work day safer.

Lower back pain may be caused by muscle irritation, bone lesions, or nerve disruption. It can follow trauma or injury to the back, but can also be caused by degeneration as a result of poor habits or the normal consequences of aging. Lower back pain can be created or worsened by poor physical condition or posture, obesity, smoking, or even sleep position. Age contributes to the risk of injury or damage because over time, small twists, slips, or over lifting can have cumulative effects.

### Safe lifting procedures:

- Following safe lifting procedures can prevent the majority of back injuries, so let's review them.
- Facing the load, position your feet about shoulder width apart with one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Bend your knees and squat, keeping your back straight.
- Get a firm grip on the load using your hands - not just your fingertips.
- Lift steadily with your legs
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Keep your back straight while carrying the load.
- Remember to follow the same procedures in reverse when putting down the load.
- Whenever possible, use mechanical help, such as carts, hand trucks, or forklifts.

### How to keep your back strong:

Even proper lifting can cause back pain or injury if your back isn't strong and healthy. Some tips to keep your back in shape are:

- If your job requires you to stand for long periods, elevate one foot and alternate legs regularly.

- Also, stand straight, but keep your knees bent slightly.
- Avoid sitting for extended periods.
  - If you must, be sure to sit up straight and in a firm chair.
  - Keep both feet on the floor and don't cross your legs.
  - Also be sure to get up and stretch regularly, but never arch your back.
- Sleep on a firm mattress.
  - Placing a sheet of plywood under the mattress can help.
- Sleep on your side with your knees bent and separated by a pillow, or on your back with pillows under your knees and a pillow supporting your neck.

### **Take care of your back:**

Your general physical condition can have a lot to do with the health of your back. For example, muscles in your stomach and in your back support your back. If these muscles are weak, you run a greater risk of injury. Consider getting yourself involved in a regular exercise routine.

Exercise will also help you keep your weight in check. Carrying excess pounds causes constant strain on your back.

If you talk to people who exercise regularly, most of them will tell you it's a great way to reduce stress. Reducing stress is also a way to reduce back injuries. Stress causes muscles to tense - including your back muscles. And as some of you may already know, tense back muscles can mean back pain.

Finally, don't be a superman or a superwoman. If something is too heavy for you to handle, get help from a co-worker or use a mechanical aid.

### **Remember:**

As we mentioned, the single most common source of back injuries is improper lifting. Remember that each and every time you prepare to lift something. Back injuries can put you out of commission for a long time. Sometimes, they'll nag you forever. So please take care of your back.

***LIFTING'S A BREEZE...WHEN YOU BEND AT THE KNEES!!***

