

Preventing Back Injuries

Back injuries on the job can cost a business big money. And once you've had a back injury, you're four times more likely to suffer another one. All this can be easily prevented by taking proper precautions on the job.



Proper Lifting

Improper lifting causes most back injuries.

- ◆ When lifting, keep your back and neck in alignment, and bend at the knees, not at the waist, as you use your leg, abdominal and buttocks muscles to do the work.
- ◆ If you feel any pain, however fleeting, stop lifting.
- ◆ Avoid trying to lift objects that are too heavy for you.
- ◆ Ask for help, or use a dolly or cart to push (rather than pull) heavy loads.



Stretch

Stretching can help loosen tense back muscles, making them less susceptible to injury.

- ◆ Perform stretching exercises before work and during breaks.



Stress Management

Stress can aggravate back problems by causing your muscles to tense.

- ◆ Take deep, prolonged breaths.
- ◆ Do regular aerobic exercise.
- ◆ Take breaks.
- ◆ Laugh out loud.
- ◆ Give yourself a neck and shoulder rub.
- ◆ Meditate.



Posture

Poor posture is one of the major culprits in the growing incidence of back, neck and shoulder pain.

- ◆ Keep your ears aligned with your shoulders and hips in a straight line.
- ◆ Avoid wearing high-heeled shoes.
- ◆ Take "micro" breaks to allow muscles to recover.
- ◆ Vary your positions.



- ◆ When standing, use a footstool, if possible, to elevate one foot and alternate.
- ◆ Keep your knees flexed, not locked.
- ◆ Stand on a mat or carpeted or padded surface whenever possible.

Avoid Substances

Nicotine and caffeine stimulate adrenaline, increasing sensitivity to pain.

- ◆ Try drinking juice or bottled water instead of coffee or caffeinated soft drinks.
- ◆ Quit smoking.



If You Have Back Pain

- ◆ Some over-the-counter medications, such as ibuprofen or aspirin, can relieve back pain and reduce inflammation. If back pain persists, see your doctor.
- ◆ Sit with an electric heating pad on your lower back. To avoid accidental burns, use the heating pad for no more than 20 to 30 minutes at a time. Remove the pad for at least 10 minutes between sessions.