

Proper Lifting Techniques

Size up the load, there are several ways that you can do this. One method is to look at the weight label on the carton or package. Another method is to lift one corner to gauge the weight. This will give you an idea of what you are up against - before you start the lift.

Next, do a few stretching exercises to warm up your back, arm, and leg muscles. Cold, stiff muscles can be easily injured.

Then, plan your route. Make sure you know where you are going with the object and check the route for obstacles. If you have to walk quite a distance with your load, pre-plan spots where you can easily stop for a short rest. But, a better solution is to use a hand truck for long distances.

Protect your hands. Examine the load for sharp edges, metal staples or leaks. Wear gloves if necessary.

Lift the object right. Get close to the article and center your body over your feet. Bend your knees, and keep your spine straight. Grasp the package. Use your stronger leg muscles to push yourself upright.

As you start the lift, raise your eyes and look ahead. This will keep your spine in correct alignment.

Keep the load close to your body to exert less force on your back.

Make sure you can clearly see over the load. If your vision is blocked you may trip and fall.

Always move your feet rather than twisting your body to change directions.

To unload, crouch down and use your thigh muscles to lower the object. Keep your back straight, and the article held close to your body while unloading.

Risk Services Notes

HOW TO PREVENT BACK INJURIES

Get Back To Basics

Many of us, at some point in our lives, suffer from some kind of back pain. So what can you do?

First, let's look at the structure of your spine. The spine is made up of 24 bones, called vertebrae, separated by spheres of cartilage which add mobility to your back while also functioning as shock absorbers.

The spine is supported by muscle, but can you guess which group of muscles is the most important? If you guessed the stomach muscles, then give yourself a pat on the back. This is where you'll find the other muscles and ligaments that do the rest of the support work.

Maintaining a good back begins off the job. Good posture is the easiest place to start. Remember, good posture is the opposite of slouching.

Stand straight - Keep your feet spread as far apart as your shoulder width. This helps your balance. Stand straight with your shoulders back and your head up. Your center of gravity should be located around your stomach. Proper posture while standing will allow all the muscles responsible for spine support to share the load. When standing for long periods of time, wear low-heeled, comfortable and supportive shoes. Change your position often. Use a footrest to elevate one foot. Keep your knees slightly bent.

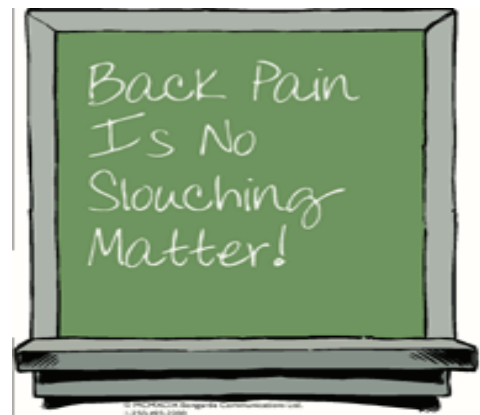
Sit straight - Poor posture when sitting, combined with weak muscles, is a sure way to make you susceptible to back pain. Sit up straight. Keep your feet flat on the floor, your knees slightly higher than your hips, and your back against the back of the chair. Moving your chair closer to your work will reduce your opportunity to slouch.

Lose weight and strengthen muscles - Keeping your weight within your normal range is a surefire way to reduce the load-bearing stress on your back. Strengthening your stomach muscles will add much needed support to your spine.

Sleep - Since most of us spend at least one-third of every day on our backs sleeping, what you sleep

on and how you sleep will have a great effect on the condition of your back. Make sure your mattress is firm and provides adequate support. When sleeping, lie on your side, not your back or stomach.

Taking care of your back is a health priority we often neglect. Caring for your back is a case of getting back to basics.



If you have not had a back injury, you might think it can't happen to you. But the fact is back problems are responsible for the most days lost from work due to injury. And no one is immune from back injury, no matter how tough they are or what kind of work they do.

Back injuries commonly involve several factors. The natural aging process contributes to back problems. So do poor posture, overweight and poor health. A buildup of small injuries from incorrect lifting or other physical stress can eventually bring on a painful and disabling back injury.

A trauma can also hurt your back. Falls and motor vehicle accidents cause many serious back injuries. So can an abrupt twist or a sudden strain - such as catching a heavy object as it falls or is tossed to you by a co-worker.

But there is a lot you can do to prevent back injury. Maintaining good general health and fitness, using good posture for all activities at work and off the job, and using safe lifting techniques are the most significant things you can do to keep your back injury-free.



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