

Back Injury Prevention

Anyone who has sustained a back injury will tell you how it affects everything you do. Even a deep breath can be painful. A back injury can cause reduced productivity or time off from work, and recovery can take a long time. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), back disorders are one of the leading causes of disability for people in their working years.

There are many causes of back pain, such as exerting too much force on your back and repeating certain movements, especially those that involve twisting or rotating your spine. Inactivity, such as sitting at a desk with poor posture or without back support, can also contribute to back pain.

Statistics

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, work-related musculoskeletal disorders that result in days away from work most commonly involve the back. In fact, musculoskeletal disorders cause one-third of work-related injuries resulting in missed workdays, costing about \$45 to \$54 billion annually in lost productivity and treatment, according to estimates from the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine.



Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to identify areas where a back injury may occur and what can be done to avoid it.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

What You Can Do to Reduce Back Injuries

Use the Proper Lifting Techniques

- Keep a wide base** of support. Your feet should be shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly ahead of the other (karate stance).
- Squat down**, bending at your hips and knees only. If needed, put one knee to the floor and your other knee in front of you, bent at a right angle.
- Maintain good posture.** Look straight ahead, and keep your back straight, chest out, and shoulders back. This helps keep your upper back straight while having a slight arch in your lower back.
- Slowly lift** the object by straightening your hips and knees, **not** your back. Keep your back straight, and **do not twist** as you lift.
- Hold** the object close to your body, at the level of your belly button.
- Use your feet** to change direction, taking small steps.
- Lead with your hips** as you change direction. Keep your shoulders in line with your hips as you move.
- Set down** the object carefully, squatting with the knees and hips only.

Exercise Your Back, and Stretch Before Lifting

- Strong muscles help reduce the potential for injury. Don't just work out your back muscles, work all of your muscles. Balanced strength is key!
- A long muscle is a strong muscle. Flexibility and stretching are important, so make sure you stretch often.
- Before any physical exertion (e.g., lifting heavy objects), stretch the muscles that will be used, which will warm up the muscle and reduce the chance for injury.
- Health is also extremely important. An active lifestyle along with healthy habits, such as getting good sleep and eating right, will all help to reduce the chance for injury.

To learn more, take the [back injury and lifting training](#) on myHR Learn.

Report all injuries on the Risk Management [website](#) or call 847.491.5582.

Safety at Home

Back injuries do not just occur at work. The same precautions taken at work should also be applied at home, including:

- If possible, avoid lifting objects that are heavy by yourself. Ask for help.
- When in the garden, people are often bent over, which causes strain to the lower back. Take frequent breaks, do some stretching, and stop before it becomes painful.
- Sleep is important for health. If you wake up with back pain, take a look at your mattress, as it may be the problem. A mattress should give support and should not cause pain in the morning. It could be the age of the mattress or the wrong type for you. Consult with a professional if you are experiencing back pain after a night of sleep.

For Additional Information

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