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Back Injuries

Back strains represent one of the largest segments of employee injuries in the American workplace, according to the Department of Labor. Some ten million employees suffer work-impairing back pain each year, producing billions annually in worker's compensation payments, to say nothing of productivity loss. A good back care program can lower your health care cost and increase productivity. Back care programs can include job redesign, training and exercise programs.

How To Make Lifting Safer

Back strain comes from improper methods of lifting, pushing, carrying, lowering, bending and twisting. A heavy load, wrong move, slip, or fall can cause back strain. The bad fact about back strain is that once you injure your back it is easier to have repeat injuries. As you accomplish your everyday work it is easy to see that you have to lift, bend, push or pull as part of your job. In the past the way we tried to reduce back injuries was by:

1. How to lift
2. Restrict the weight
3. Select strongest worker for heavy work

Recently research and industrial studies show that these measures alone were not nearly as effective as the new recommendations. Now we focus on Engineering controls: such as redesigning existing workplaces, jobs and equipment to suit the worker and Administrative controls: which includes training and education for all workers on the sources and remedies for back injuries, as well as proper body mechanics.

Make The Job Fit The Worker

Follow these steps

Reduce the size or weight of the object to be lifted. Maximum weights for a given task requirements; smaller items to be moved and the use of handles to stabilize the object being handled.

Adjusting the height of a shelf or pallet. Lifting below the knee or above the shoulder is more strenuous than between these limits.

Installation of mechanical aids such as conveyors, lifts, and/or automated materials handling equipment.

Work station redesign to limit the movement and offer the option of standing or

sitting.

Reducing loads to be lifted.

Look at the duration, frequency, and type of lifting being done, these also increase the likelihood of back strains.

Remember that your leg muscles are stronger than your back muscles. If you must lift manually, bend at the legs and push up from the waist. Look at the job and try to redesign work to keep their backs straight.

Train To Prevent

Supervisors can help their people prevent back injuries through training and education about the mechanics and the limits of the back.

Good Posture

You can aid in reducing the strain on your back by maintaining good posture. Stand tall don't slouch. Keep your knees bent slightly and tuck your chin in.

Body Mechanics

Standing: If you have to stand a long time, elevate one leg on a stool or rail and alternate legs from time to time.

Sitting: Sit up straight on a firm seat. Change your position often, keep both feet on the floor, and don't cross your legs. Get up and stretch from time to time (but don't arch your back),

Exercise

Back pain originates from stress and strain on the muscles that protect your spine. When these muscles are strong you are more likely to have a healthy pain free back. Walking and swimming, as well as partial sit-ups can both strengthen abdominal muscles which support your lower back.

Leg muscles are very important in the act of lifting safely. The simple act of walking regularly will aid in strengthening the leg muscles. A 30 minute brisk walk four times a week will tone your leg muscles and improve lifting ability.

Safety Classes Offered

Just a reminder that the following safety training classes are available to be presented for you at your safety meetings.

Confined Spaces (permit required)

Confined Space Awareness

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Ergonomics (Office or Industrial)
Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
Heat Stress
Cryogenics
Chemical Safety
General Office Safety

If you would like to setup a class contact your supervisor and he can schedule by contacting Butch Jones at 48743; there are limited classes so get your request in early.