

# Protect Your Back

## How This Affects You:

*Your back is used in all you do, on and off the job, and hurting it can have severe consequences: a lifetime of pain, inability to work or play and reduced income.*

There's an alternative, though. You can follow safe work practices to prevent injuries, and practice back care at all times.

Back injuries come in two major types: the first is traumatic injury, caused by a single incident such as a fall, a car crash or a misjudged dive into water. If the spinal cord is injured the victim may lose the use of any or all limbs.

## To prevent traumatic back injuries:

- Always wear a seatbelt in a motor vehicle.
- Wear fall arrest equipment and follow all safe work practices when working at heights.
- Before diving into water, be sure it is deep enough and that there are no underwater obstructions.
- Never mix alcohol or drugs with water sports, snowmobiling or other recreational activities.
- Don't attempt to catch a heavy object if it falls or someone tosses it to you.

The second sort of back injury is cumulative. Cumulative injuries happen when years of back abuse and minor strains and sprains add up to a back injury which can be seriously disabling.

## To help prevent cumulative back injuries:

- Don't sit or stand too long in one position. If your job requires you to stand, alternate feet on a raised footrest. Floor mats can also prevent back strains if you're required to stand at a work station through your whole shift.
- Lift correctly. Size up the load before attempting to pick it up. Get help or use a mechanical lifting device if necessary.

- Lift with your legs, not your back. Bend your knees and keep your back straight. Crouch down close to the object and lift by straightening your legs.
- Do not twist, bend or extend your arms when you are lifting or carrying an object, and hold the object as close to your body as possible.
- Don't attempt to lift or move an object above your shoulder height.
- Practice good posture at all times — reasonably straight while maintaining the three natural curves in your back.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Excess pounds are a direct cause of numerous cumulative back problems.

*Back care is a safety basic that must be part of every activity you do. Using caution at work and off the job can prevent back problems.*

**QUIZ**

1. Back injuries can have serious long-term consequences.
  - True
  - False
2. Back injuries come in two kinds.
  - a. Aggressive and passive
  - b. Rib ticklers and gut busters
  - c. Cumulative and traumatic
3. Traumatic back injury can be caused by:
  - a. Car accidents
  - b. Falls
  - c. Diving into shallow water
  - d. Any of the above.
4. The cumulative type of back injury is more likely caused by:
  - a. Slipping and falling
  - b. Standing by a bench all day
  - c. Tumbling down a flight of steps
  - d. All of the above
5. One of the best things you can do for your back is maintain a healthy weight.
  - True
  - False

## **BEFORE THE TALK - TIPS**

1. Look for injury reports relating to back injuries at your workplace. Is there any one place or activity that seems to be the main problem?
2. Review your company's policies on using lifting devices instead of manual lifts.
3. Make sure your workers understand: The safest lift is no lift at all. Studies have shown that even correct lift techniques may not prevent back injuries in a significant way. Avoiding manual lifting is safer.
4. What sort of loads are your workers asked to move? Are safe lifting load limits and procedures in place?
5. If they are used in your workplace, demonstrate the use of mechanical lifting devices or aids.
6. Ask if anyone can suggest a way to lower the risk of back injuries in their work area.
7. Ask workers to share their experiences of back injury.

## **AFTER THE TALK- *CHECKLIST***

## PROVIDED FOLLOW-UP TO WORKERS THAT DID

## POORLY ON THE QUIZ

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## OBSERVED WORKERS

### TASK(S):

DATE:

## REFRESHER TRAINING

## TOPIC(S):

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DATE:

**OTHER (DESCRIBE):**

MEETING DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES

## ATTENDANCE

**INSTRUCTOR:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SAFETY TALK:** \_\_\_\_\_