

Protecting Your Back



Back injuries account for nearly 20% of all injuries and illnesses in the workplace and cost the nation an estimated 20 to 50 billion dollars per year. How do these back injuries occur.

Lifting: Improper lifting techniques

Slips & Falls: Slippery/ cluttered walking surfaces, inattentive walking/in a hurry

Equipment Related: Machinery or tools that put a strain on your lower back

Passive: Poor posture or standing and sitting in one position for too long

To reduce your chances of injuring your back, take the time to increase your awareness of the causes listed above. Keep in mind the above stats are only from back injuries that occurred in the workplace. These numbers can more than double as result of back injuries that occur at home.

Lifting is the leading cause of back injuries so let's review proper lifting techniques.

- **Stretch/Warm-up** - First things first: take some time to stretch and warm up your back muscles, just as athletes do before a game.
- **Prepare/Plan** - Assess the weight, don't be a hero and get someone to help or a dolly. Ensure your pathway is clear and the object will fit where you are placing it.
- **Bend at the knees** - Ensure you squat in front of the object so the load can be lifted and lowered with the muscles in your legs, not your back.
- **Hold the load close to you** - Reaching out with the load is a major cause of injury. 10 lbs can feel like 30 lbs by moving the load 8 inches away from your core.



If You Injure Your Back

1. If it hurts to move, stay still and seek help.
2. Don't ignore the pain because you may make the injury worse.
3. Report the injury to your supervisor immediately.
4. Give yourself time to heal. Many people follow the doctors job restrictions while at work but ignore them around the house.