

Back Injury Prevention

Why Protect Your Back?

POINTS ABOUT BACK INJURY

- Twice as many back injuries occur at home as in the workplace.
- Encourage your family and friends to use these techniques for lifting and moving things, too.
- Back Pain is one of the most common health problems in America.
- Around 80 percent of the population can expect to have back Pain at some time in their lives. About eight million Americans suffer new back injuries every year.
- Remember, back problems can bring more pain and lifestyle change than almost any other form of injury. Protecting your back is a 24-hour-a-day job. The principles and techniques we will be discussing and practicing should be used all the time at work, at home and at play.

Causes of Back Pain

- Poor body mechanics, the way your entire body adjusts to keep its balance as you move and rest. You upset your body mechanics if you move or lift heavy objects incorrectly, carry or lift something too heavy, sit or stand in an unnatural position, or twist your body abruptly or awkwardly.
- Weak, under-exercised muscles rob the back of support. Poor muscle tone also makes the muscles more likely to be injured when they are stressed.
- Extra body weight often settles in abdomen and hips, and strains the back by exaggerating the curve of the lower spine. The more weight, the deeper the curve: just 10 pounds of extra weight in the abdomen, even pregnancy, can equal 100 pounds of pressure on the spine.
- Wearing high heels affects posture and can cause back pain. Standing or walking in high heels deepens the curve in the lower back, forcing the bottom of the pelvis to tilt backward to keep the body in balance.
- Improper diet makes the back more vulnerable to injury, especially if you don't get enough calcium (for strong bones in the spine) and protein (for strong muscles and ligaments). Lack of sleep can rob strength from every part of your body, including your back.

IMPROPER LIFTING IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF BACK INJURY

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LIFTING ARE:

- Analyze the work to be done.

- Ask for help with heavy work.
- Distribute weight to be carried as evenly as possible.
- Push heavy objects rather than pull.
- Keep objects to be carried close to your body.
- Maintain a wide base of support and secure grip.
- Tighten abdominal muscles, time and coordinate lift.
- When turning, pivot with feet and avoid twisting body.

Specifics:

Over the years, you have heard that bending knees and keeping the back straight will prevent back injuries. This is not true. Lifting should be accomplished much in the same way that a weight lifter does. When lifting the knees and hips should be fully bent and the lower back locked inward. In this position the weight is as close to the body as it can be. The head and shoulders must come up first. This is important in order to help maintain the inward curve during the entire lift. The maximum amount of stress will be placed on the lower back as you begin the lift. Keeping the lower back locked in its normal inward curve allows the stronger leg and hip muscles to perform the lift protecting the back from injury.