



Overview

Sprains and strains to the muscles, tendons, and ligaments of the back are common injuries that are often avoidable. Be aware of the causes of back injuries and your lifting limitations. Remember, back injuries don't just happen at work; they can happen at home, or while you're out having fun. And, a back injury often limits all of your activities, so remembering a few pointers on lifting techniques can help keep you healthy.

Avoiding back injury

Poor posture can put stress on back muscles. Poor physical condition can lead to weak back muscles. Practice a regular exercise program to stretch and strengthen your back muscles. Bending or twisting while lifting can cause injury. Repeated minor strains can develop into an injury. Back injuries are not always caused by lifting something too heavy. Stress and tension can contribute to back pain.

Size up the load. Test the weight by moving a corner of the object, and get help for heavy or awkward loads. Make sure that you have a clear path to carry the load, and a clear area to set it down.

Stand with your feet close to the object, and center yourself over the load. Bend your knees. This is the single most important part of lifting. The large muscles in your legs are designed to carry weight, and bending your knees gets your legs ready to support the load. Get a good grip on the object. Clean and dry surfaces are easier to handle than wet and greasy ones. Straighten your legs to lift straight up in a slow, smooth motion.

Keep the load held close to your body. Do not twist or turn while carrying the load. Sudden twisting motions can injure the disks in your back. Bend your knees again as you lower the load to set it down.

Loads on carts or wheels should be pushed, not pulled. Get help for lifting items that are long, bulky, that don't have a good place to grip, or are too heavy for one person. Know when mechanical lifting equipment should be used instead of manual lifting; follow your company's guidelines for weight limits. If possible, divide a heavy load into several smaller ones.

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