Back Safety and Injury Prevention Summary

Back pain is the one of the most common reasons individuals see a doctor.

Avoiding Back Injuries

-Avoid bending

Raise the load

-Avoid bending and twisting

Store materials at waist level; move your feet and don't twist

-Avoid bending and reaching

Use adjustable height table; minimize the distance between you and your work

-Avoid pulling

Push rather than pull

Lift Safety

- Assess the load
- Use assist equipment
- Alter the load
- Get help from a co-worker
- Use proper body mechanics

Fight Back Pain

- Maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle
- Avoid becoming fatigued with one job task
- Move and stretch regularly
- Get enough rest and de-stress regularly
- Strengthen back and leg muscles
- Increase flexibility by stretching

Maintain Correct Sitting Posture

- Support your spine along its curve
- Adjust your seat so that your low back is supported
- Lean back slightly, not forward
- Keep feet flat and comfortably supported on the floor
- Keep knees level or slightly higher than hips
- Remove articles from back pockets
- Stretch often and vary your position
- Alternate tasks and postures throughout the day

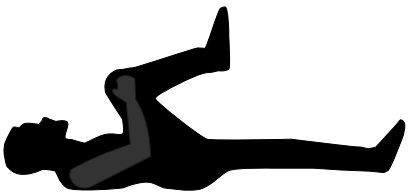
Back Safety and Injury Prevention Summary

Stretches for Preventing and Minimizing Back Pain

Prone Press Up

- Lie on your stomach with your elbows underneath you and palms flat on the floor
- Keep your hips and pelvis in contact with the floor
- Lift your upper torso off the floor with your arms, keeping your back muscles relaxed (Only go as high as is comfortable)
- Hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Perform ten repetitions.

Single Knee to Chest

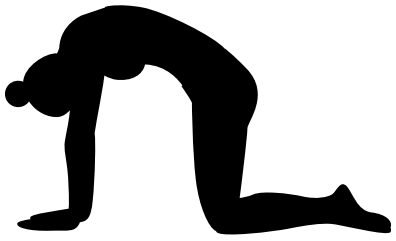


- Lie on your back with both legs straight
- Bring one knee up towards your chest
- Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat with the other leg. Perform 2 to 3 repetitions

Child's Pose

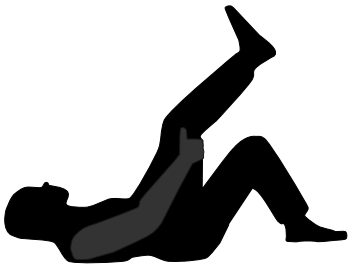
- On your hands and knees, sit back so your buttocks are resting on your heels
- Reach your hands forward to lengthen your spine and feel a stretch in your middle back
- Hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Perform 2 to 3 repetitions

Angry Cat



- On your hands and knees, let your belly sag slightly towards the floor
- To increase flexion through your spine, pull the center of your spine away from the floor
- Hold the stretch for 5 to 10 seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat several times.

Sciatic Nerve Strech



- Lie on your back with your hands behind one bent knee
- Straighten your knee and alternate between flexing and pointing your foot
- Hold the stretch for a few seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat with the other leg. Perform 10 times on each leg.

Back Safety and Injury Prevention Discussion Guide

1. In what situations at work have you noticed that your posture and body mechanics (proper and improper) influence how your back feels? What can you do to encourage proper posture and body mechanics in your work area?

Answers will depend on worksite.

2. What can we do to help prevent back injuries at our worksite? Are there things we can do better? What can we do to decrease back injuries related to moving heavy materials?

Things to look for:

- Emphasize the importance of assessing the load
- Facilitate work areas that store materials at waist level and can easily be reached
- Have assist devices readily available
- Encourage dividing the load or altering the load
- Post reminders on the importance of using proper body mechanics when lifting

3. What lifestyle, strength and flexibility changes can you implement in your private life, work area, and work habits that will decrease your risk of back injuries?

Things to look for:

- Maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle
- Stay Active
- Rest and de-stress
- Stay flexible, strech muscles regularly
- Strengthen muscles

Back Safety and Injury Prevention

Use this checklist to discover any potential problem areas regarding Back Safety and Injury Prevention in your workplace.

SAFETY-FOCUSED WORK ENVIRONMENT	YES/NO/COMMENTS	DATE	INITALS
Do work areas include enough space to stand or sit comfortably, adjust work positions as needed, and move around?			
Are workers able to move around without being inhibited by obstructions?			
Are work areas equipped with adequate ambient and task lighting that is not overly bright or harsh?			
Are furnishings adjustable and appropriate for work activities and environment?			
Do workers have adjustable chairs that provide back support and cushioning?			
Are work surfaces an appropriate height and distance so workers are not required to use awkward postures or positions?			
Are storage shelves organized in such a way as to minimize the need for workers to bend and reach?			
TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT	**YES/NO/COMMENTS**	**DATE**	**INITALS**
Does the company provide workers with tools and equipment that are appropriate for specific job tasks and will minimize stresses on the back? Examples include but are not limited to: •Tools with long handles •Torque bars •Vibration-absorbing gloves •Low-vibration tools • Mobile, freestanding toolboxes			
PERSONAL AND LIFESTYLE PRACTICES	**YES/NO/COMMENTS**	**DATE**	**INITALS**
Do you encourage employees to live a healthy lifestyle including, but not limited to: • Eating a healthy diet • Exercising regularly • Avoiding nicotine/smoking • Avoiding a sedentary lifestyle • Practicing stress reduction techniques (such as meditation) • Staying flexible and reducing tension by practicing yoga, Pilates, etc.			