

# 8019 - Back Safety



Back disorders are listed in the "top ten" leading workplace injuries published by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. They account for 27 percent of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses involving days away from work. It's no wonder. Your back is a sophisticated piece of machinery made up of numerous muscles, bones, nerves, and supporting tissues. It's a machine you use every day, probably in ways you don't even notice.

While lifting:

- Don't bend over an object you are lifting. Bend your knees, squatting in front of the object to reach it.
- Lift the object slowly and carefully, using your leg and arm muscles to lift, not pulling with your back.
- Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.
- While lifting, keep the object as close to your body as possible.
- Keep abdominal muscles tight while making the lift.
- Use the same techniques when you put the object down.
- If the object is too big or too heavy to lift using these techniques, use mechanical assistance or get someone else to help.

When reaching for objects:

- Do not reach for an object unless you're sure you're strong enough to lift it.
- Use a step ladder to reach objects above shoulder height.
- Avoid awkward stretches while reaching. These stress your back and could cause you to lose your balance.
- Don't depend on structures to support you (e.g., a shelf support, a storage rack, etc.). These could easily give way if you pull or tug on them.

Exercise also plays an important role in keeping your back strong, healthy, and flexible. A properly exercised back is less likely to be injured. Your physician, company medical personnel, or other health-care provider can recommend the best exercises for you, taking into account your physical condition and the type of work you do.

Stretch often! & Shift positions!

- Change (shift) your posture often.
- Stretch frequently throughout the day.
- Keep your body flexible (not rigid or fixed); static posture becomes uncomfortable and decreases productivity.
- Don't force your body to conform to its workspace. Habitually poor posture will cause increased aches and pains.

Listen to your body! Be careful!

- Feeling discomfort or pain is an indication that something is wrong! Heed the signs! Combinations of awkward posture, force, repetitions, and insufficient rest periods are a set up for injury.
- Take more frequent "mini-breaks" before you become fatigued. Become aware of mounting stresses, aches and pains.

## **5-Minute Pre-Work (or anytime) Warm-Up**

Hamstring stretch – hold 20 seconds both sides (3 times)

- Lower back stretch – 20 seconds (3 times)
- Side stretch – 20 seconds (3 times)
- Arm circles – 10 times both ways
- Shoulder shrugs – 10 times both ways
- Wrist circles – 10 times both ways

