

# BACK SAFETY - TAKING CARE OF YOUR BACK

## Back Safety

Eight of every 10 people will suffer from back pain at some time in their lives. And, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 582,000 work-related back injuries in 1999. These numbers are almost unbelievable because it seems like back safety and proper lifting procedures are all you ever hear about. Obviously, not everyone is getting the message. So I'm here today to spread the word on basic back safety.

## Safe Lifting Procedures

Following safe lifting procedures can prevent injuries, so let's review

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1. Facing the load, about shoulder width slightly ahead of the other.

2. Bend your knees and squat, keeping your back straight.

3. Get a firm grip on the load, using your hands - not just your fingertips.

4. Lift steadily with you legs

5. Keep the load close to your body.

6. Keep your back straight while carrying the load.

7. Remember to follow the same procedures in reverse when putting down the load.

8. Whenever possible, use mechanical help, such as carts, hand trucks or forklifts.

## How to Keep Your Back Strong

Even proper lifting can cause back pain or injury if your back isn't strong and healthy. Some tips to keep your back in shape include:

1. If your job requires you to stand for long periods, elevate one foot and alternate legs regularly. Also, stand straight, but keep your knees bet slightly.



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demonstration)

position your feet apart with one foot



2. Avoid high heels

3. Avoid sitting for extended periods. If you must, be sure to sit up straight and in a firm chair. Keep both feet on the floor and don't cross you legs. Also be sure to get up and stretch regularly, but never arch you back.

4. Sleep on a firm mattress. Placing a sheet of plywood under the mattress can help.

5. Sleep on your side with your knees bent and separated by a pillow, or on your back with pillows under your knees and a pillow supporting your neck.

## Take Care of Your Back

Your general physical condition can have a lot to do with the health of your back. For example, your back is supported by muscles in your stomach and in your back. If these muscles are weak, you run a greater risk of injury. Consider getting yourself involved in a regular exercise routine.

Exercise will also help you keep your weight in check. Carrying excess pounds causes constant strain on your back.

If you talk to people who exercise regularly, most of them will tell you it's a great way to reduce stress. Reducing stress is also a way to reduce back injuries. Stress causes muscles to tense - including your back muscles. And as some of you may already know, tense back muscles can mean back pain.

Finally, don't be a superman or a superwoman. If something is too heavy for you to handle, get help from a co-worker or use a mechanical aid.

## Conclusion

As we mentioned, the single most common source of back injuries is improper lifting. Remember that each and every time you prepare to lift something. Back injuries can put you out of commission for a long time. Sometimes, they'll nag you forever. So please take care of your back.

Have a safe day!