

Patient Information Center: Treating Back Pain

Work place injuries account for billions of dollars in lost wages, lost worker productivity, and increased health care expenses each year. Injuries to the lower back are among the most common in the work place.

It is believed that this occurs for several reasons. First, the worker does not utilize proper lifting techniques while on the job, second, the work place environment puts abnormal, repetitive stresses on the spine, and third, the worker is not in good physical condition.

In order to reduce your risk for work place injuries, the Iowa Chiropractic Society recommends the following precautions:

1. Stretch and warm-up before you work.
2. Reduce the weight of the object you are repeatedly lifting. Lowering the total weight a worker lifts each day reduces the potential for injury.
3. Use proper lifting techniques:
 - a. The object should be close to your body.
 - b. Bend at the knees, not at the waist. This allows you to lift with your legs, not your back.
 - c. Tighten your stomach muscles before you lift. This helps stabilize the lower back.
4. If turning is involved, try to turn by moving your feet, NOT twisting at the waist. This will take stress off the lower back. Also, do equal amounts to both the left and right side.
5. Use a back brace, properly. Back braces (lumbo-sacral supports) should only be tightened during the lifting event, unless otherwise instructed by a physician. These support belts should not be worn tight throughout the day as this will eventually lead to the weakening of the lower back muscles.
6. Do not lift heavy objects above your head.
7. Repetitive lifting should be broken up by non-lifting activities. This allows the muscles of the lower back to rest.
8. Spinal evaluations/screenings should be preformed at least on a yearly basis. This will help to identify potential injuries before they occur.

Following these tips will help to reduce the risk of work place injuries. If injuries do occur, you should consult a chiropractic physician immediately.

Source: (Iowa Chiropractic Association)