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OVERVIEW

A back injury can cause painful and even permanent injuries. Two common classes of back injuries are:

- “Soft tissue” injuries involving muscle or ligament.
- Injuries to the spinal disks.

Protecting your back will save you pain and injury as well as keeping you on the job.

COMMON CAUSES OF BACK INJURIES

- Lifting materials that are too heavy or unstable.
- Lifting objects to or from awkward locations such as placing over head or lifting from the ground.
- Repetitive twisting, bending, reaching overhead or lifting.
- Working for long periods in a bent over or strained position.
- Falling
- Tripping over debris.
- Wearing tool belts that are too heavy.
- Lifting or doing any physical labor when you haven’t warmed up your muscles.



PROTECTING YOUR BACK

- Avoid lifting and bending whenever you can.
- Place objects up off the floor so you won’t have to reach down to get them.
- Always use a dolly or a forklift if you can.
- If you must lift, the best zone for lifting is between your shoulders and your waist.
- Pushing an object is better than pulling the object.
- Don’t overdo it - if you have to strain to carry the load, it’s too heavy for you.
- Make sure you have enough room to lift safely.
- Look around before you lift and know where you are going to put down the load.
- Avoid walking on slippery and uneven surfaces while carrying something.



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PREVENTING BACK INJURIES

- Plan your move
- Size up the load and make sure your path is clear
- Get help as needed
- Use handles or straps
- Use a dolly or other materials handling equipment if possible
- Use a wide, balanced stance with one foot slightly ahead of the other and with your heels on the floor.
- Get as close to the load as possible.
- Use your palms, not just your fingers to grasp the load.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as the lift begins.
- Keep your lower back in its normal arched position.
- Pivot to turn - Don't twist your back.
- Lower the load slowly, maintaining the curve in your lower back.
- Transferring weight
- Pull object towards you while transferring your weight to the lift side.
- Lift only to the level required.
- Shift your weight to the other leg while pushing the object into position.
- Do not twist.
- Lifting heavy bags.
- Put one knee down against bag
- Pull bag up leg.
- Rest bag on edge of knee.
- Stand upright.
- Pull bag to waist height.



CONCLUSION

Back support belts, when used correctly and made of stiff hard material can support your lower back and help prevent strains. They will not prevent an injury if worn improperly, if you are lifting improperly or lifting something that is too heavy. Proper lifting technique includes planning the move, using a wide, balanced stance, getting as close to the load as possible and pivoting your feet versus twisting.

