



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Safety Tips: Prevent Back Injuries



Low back pain is a common occupational problem in most industries. Agriculture isn't exempt, as relayed by the National Safety Council's Accident Facts Reports which stated that back injuries are the most frequent of all disabling work injuries in the USA. Statistics show that about 31% of all workers' compensation cases are related to back injuries. Agriculture workers are especially vulnerable to developing back problems because of the risks involved in the varied work activities.

Why it is necessary to keep all employees oriented in back injury safety?

- ✓ 1 in 5 U.S. workers suffer a back injury on the job.
- ✓ Back injuries are the second most common cause of lost time work days, next to the common cold.
- ✓ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were approximately 200,000 reported back injuries that required lost time work days in the year 2011.
- ✓ 80% of Americans will have a back injury that requires medical attention at some point in their lives. Obviously, this figure includes you and me.
- ✓ Low back pain associated with overexertion is short-lived. Those folks who seek medical attention improve in the first week and 90% improve in the first two months, regardless of treatment.

Principle Causes of Back Injuries-

- **Improper Lifting** – Improper lifting techniques are a major cause of back injuries, especially job-related injuries. Lifting a load improperly can cause a serious and immediate injury if your back is already overstrained or out of shape.
- **Awkward Motions** – Activities such as reaching, bending, and twisting are sometimes associated with the causes of back injuries. Injuries can be caused over time by wear and tear on the back or sometimes as the result of one sudden movement.
- **Physical Condition** – If you have a sore back and body on the front end, you're more likely to experience pain and back problems. This can happen when you aren't accustomed to using your back, but a situation happens and you over-exert yourself by lifting much more than you are expecting. This will sometimes result in a back strain or a sprain.
- **Excess Weight** – Being overweight or possessing a "pot belly" can put a lot of stress on your back that will gradually weaken it and possibly contribute it to an injury.
- **Poor Posture** – People often complain of back pain because they slept in an awkward position for too long. Slouching, humping, slumping and other habitual postures puts stress on your back and can lead to pain and injury over time.

- **Medical Conditions-** An underlying medical condition can make the back more susceptible to injury. For example:
 - ~ Degenerative conditions such as arthritis and osteoporosis
 - ~Viral Infections
 - ~Irritation to joints and disks

Safe Lifting Techniques-

Probably the most common cause of back injuries on the job, obviously, is improper lifting. Below we shall list some techniques for safe lifting that can aid you in preventing back injuries:

- ❖ Stand close to the object with a wide stance, shoulder-width apart, with your toes pointing outward.
- ❖ Bend your knees and hips, and try to maintain your body's natural curve.
- ❖ Pull the load close to you and grip it firmly.
- ❖ Tighten your stomach to act as a back support and lift your head. This will help you lift your legs rather than your back.
- ❖ When you're ready to lift, use your legs and keep your back straight.

There is no single lifting technique that fits all lifting situations.

Following are some other tips in addition to the ones listed above that can be advantage in reducing the potential for a back injury:

- The load should be as compact and light as possible.
- Lift only loads than can be handled safely. Test the weight of the load before you try to lift it. If it is too heavy- get help.
- As stated above, keep the load close to your body and get a firm grip, close to your body and lift it slowly.
- When lifting, rotate your body by moving your feet; avoid twisting to bending the trunk.
- If the load is too heavy for you or for one to assist, ask for a lift truck.

Suggested Ideas that will help to strengthen your back-

You would need to consult your doctor before starting an exercise program, but following are some ideas to consider and discuss with your doctor:

Walking – Walking 30 minutes a day will help strengthen muscles and prevent weight gain. Both will help prevent back injury.

Stretching – Stretching exercises will help to improve flexibility and will help to keep your back in good condition, such as: Hip rotations, body bends backwards and sideways, and twisting from side to side.

Deep Knee Squats –These will strengthen your back, legs, and stomach muscles.

There are others that your doctor can recommend, but the above are pretty basic and simple to start.

CHECK YOUR LOAD BEFORE YOU LIFT!!

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SAFE ACTIONS

BRING

LASTING SATISFACTION

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