



SAFETY BRIEF: BACK INJURY

At Hygieneering we have a variety of job descriptions from office personnel to field personnel. One thing we have in common is the potential for back injury. This month's safety topic provides some good general information on prevention of back injury that can be applied to the workplace.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

- 80% of Americas will have a back injury that requires medical attention at some time in their life.
- Every year 20% of all injuries and illnesses in the workplace are related to back injury.
- More workers lose time from work because of back injuries than any other cause except the common cold.

TYPES OF INJURIES

- **Strain:** is what most people experience, this happens when they push their backs too hard by overusing or overstretching muscles.
- **Sprain:** when a sudden movement causes a ligament to tear. This is usually the result of years of abuse.
- **Bulging disk:** when a disk begins to come out between the two vertebrae; this results in painful pressure on the spinal cord or nearby organs. The back muscles try to compensate for the injury and cause additional pain when they become strained.
- **Herniated disk:** when the disk is actually leaking its gel-like fluid. The disk can lose its ability to cushion and result in pressure on the vertebrae, spinal cord, and possibly nearby organs.

ACTIVITIES THAT CAN RESULT IN BACK INJURY

- Reaching
- Bending
- Sitting
- Poor lifting techniques

PREVENTION

Preventing back injury is easier and less painful then recovering from back injury, so remember the steps to safe lifting. Ways to continue keeping your back safe even when you are not lifting are:

- Losing excess weight
- Strengthening your back and stomach
- Reducing stress: stress creates tension in your back which could cause your muscles to spasm
- Maintaining good posture throughout your day whether you are sitting or standing.
- Asking for help if you think the load might be too heavy for you or retrieving lifting equipment.
- Good posture while:
 - Sitting: do not slouch forward or lean to the side, sit straight against the chairs backrest with shoulders back and head up. Thighs should be parallel to the floor and your feet flat.
 - Standing: straight up with shoulders back, head up and your feet shoulder width apart. Try not to slouch or hang your head, and when required to stand for long periods of time, put your foot on a bar, rail or stool (if feasible for the job at hand). This will make it more comfortable to stand and help your back maintain its natural curves.

As always, if you have safety and health concerns about your work stations or field activities, let your project manager know immediately so we can take appropriate actions!



BACK INJURY QUIZ

- 1) 80% of Americas will have a back injury that requires medical attention at some time in their life.
 True
 False

- 2) Which of the following are ways to prevent back injury?
 Losing Weight
 Reducing Stress
 Good Posture
 None of the above
 All of the above

- 3) Poor lifting techniques can result in back injury.
 True
 False

- 4) Stress has nothing to do with back injury.
 True
 False

SCORE: PASS / FAIL

Employee Signature

Supervisor Signature

Date