Dont Take Back Problems Sitting Down Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

Why do so many of us have back problems today? In part, it’s the way our work and lifestyle has evolved. As people grow more sedentary in an increasingly automated world, we’re doing more sitting and adding extra pounds. As a result, our backs are becoming more vulnerable to injury.

What’s the Danger

COMMON CAUSES OF BACK PAIN

The back is a network of fragile ligaments, discs, and muscles which can easily be thrown out of order. The back’s complex design breaks down when it is forced to perform activities it was not designed to do.

One sure way to risk injuring the back is to lift heavy or bulky loads improperly or unassisted. The unsupported back cannot operate like a derrick or a crane boom. Lifting with the back twisted or bent just begs for a pulled muscle or ruptured disc. The back can be damaged quickly but can take a long time to heal. So, workers should be encouraged to do their lifting with good sense and a little extra help from a co-worker or mechanical aid.

OFFICE BACK PAIN

If you work in an office and spend the majority of your day sitting down, you are probably not a stranger to back pain. Sitting at a desk for eight hours a day can led to stiffness and tension that causes serious discomfort while working. If your job requires you to twist or bend frequently, you may be at even higher risk of developing back pain. Between 50 and 80 percent of people will experience back pain at least once in their life, and during a single year about 20 percent of adults suffer from back pain.

When working in a sedentary office job, lower back pain can develop from physical inactivity, incorrect posture or a poorly designed workspace. How you move can also aggravate existing back pain. Luckily, by adjusting your workspace and developing healthy habits, you can prevent and reduce back pain at work.

COMMON ON-THE-JOB BACK INJURIES

Lower back injuries are fairly common among workers. Employees who must sit or stand for long periods of time may develop pain in their lower back, while employees who

are very active could easily sustain a sprain. Most of these injuries are mild and may be treated with pain medication and physical therapy.

In most cases, lower back pain is short-term and will go away naturally with proper self-care. However, about 20 percent of people who experience acute back pain later develop chronic back pain.

CHRONIC/ LONG LASTING BACK INJURIES

Bulging, herniated, and slipped discs: In between each vertebra bone sits a soft disc that acts as a shock absorber. When one of these discs slips out of place or is damaged, this can cause a great deal of pain.

Pinched nerves: When a disc pushes against a nerve in the back, this is called a pinched nerve. This type of injury can be very painful and can affect the neck, back, and legs.

Fractured vertebrae: Fractured vertebrae can require substantial medical care. Injuries that result from traumatic accidents, such as motor vehicle accidents or heavy machinery malfunctions, can include fractured vertebrae.

Degenerative disc disease: As we get older our lumbar spine discs suffer wear and tear. An accident can increase wear and tear, and aggravate, accelerate, or exacerbate your pre-existing lumbar spine disease.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BACK INJURY PREVENTION

Pay attention to posture. When standing, balance your weight evenly on your feet. Don’t slouch. To promote good posture when sitting, choose a chair that supports your lower back. Adjust the height of your chair so that your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest and your thighs are parallel to the floor. Remove your wallet or cellphone from your back pocket when sitting to prevent putting extra pressure on your buttocks or lower back.

Lift properly. When lifting and carrying a heavy object, get close to the object, bend your knees and tighten your stomach muscles. Use your leg muscles to support your body as you stand up. Hold the object close to your body. Maintain the natural curve of your back. Don’t twist when lifting.

Modify repetitive tasks. Use lifting devices, when available, to help you lift loads. Try to alternate physically demanding tasks with less demanding ones. If you work at a computer, make sure that your monitor, keyboard, mouse and chair are positioned properly. If you frequently talk on the phone and type or write at the same time, place your phone on speaker or use a headset. Avoid unnecessary bending, twisting and reaching. Limit the time you spend carrying heavy briefcases, purses and bags.

Listen to your body. If you must sit for a prolonged period, change your position often.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BACK

- Exercise regularly to keep muscles strong and flexible. Consult a physician for a list of low-impact, age-appropriate exercises that are specifically targeted to strengthening lower back and abdominal muscles.
- Maintain a healthy weight and eat a nutritious diet with sufficient daily intake of calcium and phosphorus.
- Use ergonomically designed furniture and equipment at home and at work.
- Switch sitting positions often and periodically walk around the office or gently stretch muscles to relieve tension. A pillow or rolled-up towel placed behind

the small of the back can provide some lumbar support.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- Sleeping on one’s side with the knees drawn up in a fetal position can help open up the joints in the spine and relieve pressure by reducing the curvature of the spine. Always sleep on a firm surface.
- Don’t try to lift objects that are too heavy. Lift from the knees, pull the stomach muscles in, and keep the head down and in line with a straight back. When lifting, keep objects close to the body. Do not twist when lifting.
- Quit smoking. Smoking reduces blood flow to the lower spine, which can contribute to spinal disc degeneration.
- Avoid prolonged inactivity or bed rest.
- Warm up or stretch before exercising or physical activities.

FINAL WORD

Your back is the most complicated part of the human body. Picking up a pencil to lifting with a back twisted or bent can cause life rendering harmful consequences.