



SMO 07-1001

BACK CARE: YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

By SeaBright Insurance Loss Control

“OUCH! Why did I try to lift that much weight on my own?” Did you ever ponder those words after you hoisted something heavy, or lifted from an awkward position? These incidents are well known causes of back strain, but you might not have considered other “underlying” factors that lead to back injury. Several conditions influence your “back health.”

The cause of most back problems is poor posture, loss of flexibility, stressful living/working habits and above all, a general decline in physical fitness. Surprised? You shouldn’t be. When you “let yourself go,” (and some of us do with age) the *first* thing to go can be back strength. Along with correct lifting techniques, we should also work on our overall physical condition.

Nutrition--is an important key to staying physically fit! As we grow older, our metabolism slows down. To counteract this natural event, we have to eat the right types of food—and not too much of it—or the pounds come on quickly! Now, what does nutrition have to do with a healthy back? For one thing, a healthy back is correctly balanced on your spine. With a “sway” back, that balance is lost—and those darned potbellies cause sway backs. Carrying around excess weight puts tremendous strain on back tissues, so lifting even a small extra load may cause an injury.

Exercise--plays an important role as well. A form of exercise as simple as walking 30 minutes a day can raise your heart rate and burn enough calories to help keep you lean. Flexibility is another condition that changes as we grow older, if we don’t work to retain it. It’s true, as they say—“Use it or Lose it!” Without flexibility, we lose our body’s full range of motion. Then, when a sudden, physical demand takes a muscle or joint further than it’s used to, the risk of injury is high. You can do stretching exercises every morning to keep yourself flexible and ready for the physical demands of work. After all, don’t athletes warm up before a game to prevent injury?

Fixed positions--not moving *enough*--can also cause back problems. Staying in a fixed position for too long can lead to muscle spasms. We feel it as stiffness, but by the time discomfort from “static” muscle contractions is experienced, low level tissue damage has begun. Take stretch breaks between long standing or sitting periods to improve circulation and prevent back strain.

Poor body mechanics and bad lifting habits usually “trigger” a back injury—and are more likely to do so if overall physical condition is poor. Remember these techniques to help escape injury:

- **Avoid using fast, jerking motions when lifting.**
- **Avoid bending and twisting at the same time.**
- **Avoid handling a load too far away! Keep the load close to your body.**
- **Teamwork! If the load is too heavy for one, two or more persons should carry the load.**

Emotional Stress leads to mental distraction, so that things other than proper body mechanics are on your mind. Stress and back pain seem to go together. Low back pain has been called “a tension headache that slipped.” Solving our personal problems isn’t always easy to do, but it often takes away back pain and helps prevent repeated injuries.

In Conclusion: Improper lifting isn’t the *only* thing that causes back injuries. People who do not stay in good physical and mental condition are at high risk for back problems.

It’s Up To You--Take Good Care Of Your Body and Save Your Back!



SAFETY MEETING AGENDA

DEPARTMENT/JOB SITE: _____ MEETING DATE: _____

- 1. **Open Meeting & Present safety topic:** _____
- 2. Read minutes from previous meeting.
- 3. **Persons present:**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- 4. **Old Business** – Status of previous recommendations. Discuss pending old business if any.

- 5. **Accidents** – Discuss accidents and near misses that have occurred since the last meeting. Brief summary of accidents to date by number and type. Note any trends. Discuss corrective action taken, or needed. Concentrate on accident causes to make everyone more aware.

- 6. **Inspection Reports** – Report on findings and recommendations of any inspection reports made since last meeting.

- 7. **New Business** – Solicit employee suggestions. Discuss new procedures, changes to company safety policy, etc.

TIME MEETING STARTED: _____ TIME FINISHED: _____
MEETING CHAIRED BY: _____ TITLE: _____