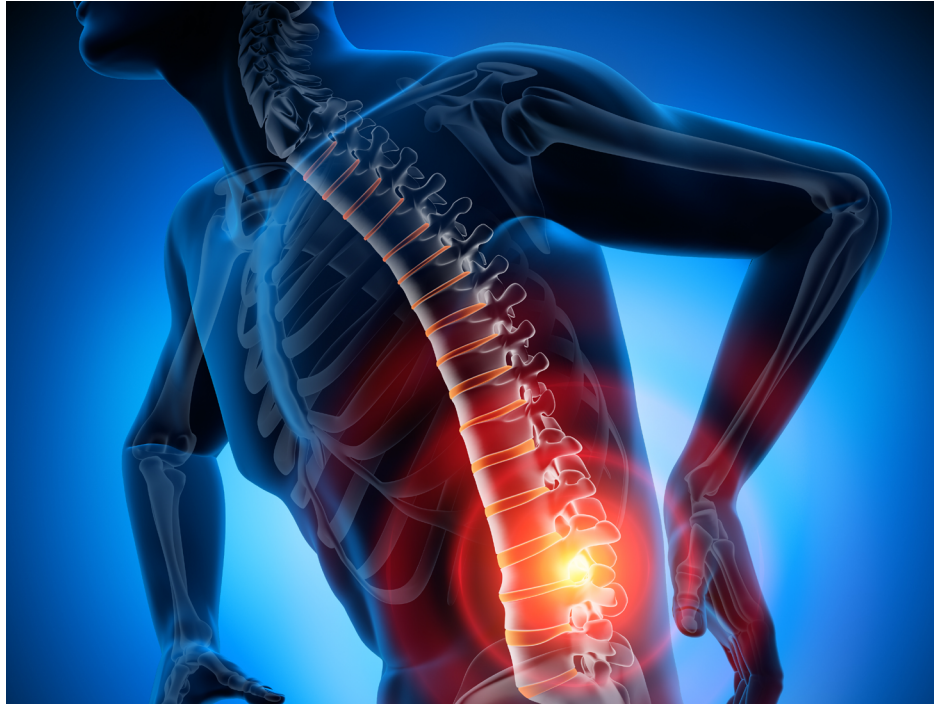


Back Injury Prevention Fact Sheet

HS01-023C (10-22)

Back injuries are among the most common workplace injuries. Heavy lifting, repetitive movements, and sitting at a desk all day can take a toll on the bones, discs, joints, ligaments, and muscles in the back. Occupations such as nursing, construction, and factory work can place severe demands on the back. Even routine office work, especially for employees with poor posture who sit all day, can cause, or worsen back pain.

Help employees keep their backs healthy and pain-free with these tips.



Maintain Good Posture

Slouching and other awkward postures can strain joints and ligaments. Whether employees sit or stand, they can reduce stress on the back by remaining in a neutral posture. That means trying to keep the back in its natural 'S' curve.

This may require employees to:

- adjust their chair so their feet rest flat on the floor (or on a footrest), so their thighs remain parallel to the floor;
- change the height of their workstation so they stand tall with head up and shoulders back while handling items; and
- remove their wallet or cell phone from their back pocket while sitting to prevent extra pressure on the lower back.

Reduce Repetitive Tasks

Repeating certain movements, especially those that involve twisting or rotating the spine, can injure the back.

To protect the back, try to:

- alternate physically demanding tasks with easier ones;
- keep the computer monitor, keyboard, mouse, and chair positioned correctly to prevent over-reaching or slouching over the desk;
- use a speaker or a headset when talking on the phone to prevent awkward postures; and
- avoid unnecessary bending, twisting, and reaching.

Lift Properly

Exerting too much force on the back can cause injury. Develop procedures and training to let employees know how to lift properly, such as:

- get close to the object;
- bend the knees;
- tighten the stomach muscles;
- let the legs support the body when standing;
- avoid twisting; and
- keep the object close to the body.

In addition to teaching employees to lift properly, train employees to:

- plan a lift by considering the object's weight and the distance it needs to be moved;
- use a two-person lift or a mechanized lifting method, such as a cart or dolly, if the object is too heavy, awkward, or bulky for one person to lift safely; and

- assess the work area for hazards before lifting to ensure there are no spills or unstable flooring, adequate lighting, and enough space to move freely.

Avoid Inactivity

An inactive job or a desk job can result in back pain, especially for employees who sit for hours in a chair with poor back support. If employees must sit for a prolonged period, encourage them to:

- change their position frequently;
- gently stretch their muscles often; and
- walk around to relieve tension every 20 to 30 minutes.

Keep a Healthy Lifestyle

Aging, obesity, and poor physical condition can contribute to back pain. While employees cannot control their age, they can focus on maintaining healthy habits. Employers can also use their wellness program to encourage employees to:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Extra weight puts stress on the back and stomach muscles, so maintaining a healthy weight can reduce the risk of strain and pain.
- **Eat healthily.** Provide information on proper nutrition. A doctor can provide advice on losing or maintaining a healthy weight for individual employees.
- **Exercise.** The muscles that support the spine's vertebrae



are the most common source of back pain, especially if muscles are weak, tight, or tired. Encourage employees to get regular exercise that stretches and strengthens back and abdomen muscles to help maintain a strong back. Employees should always check with a doctor to find the best exercise plan for them.

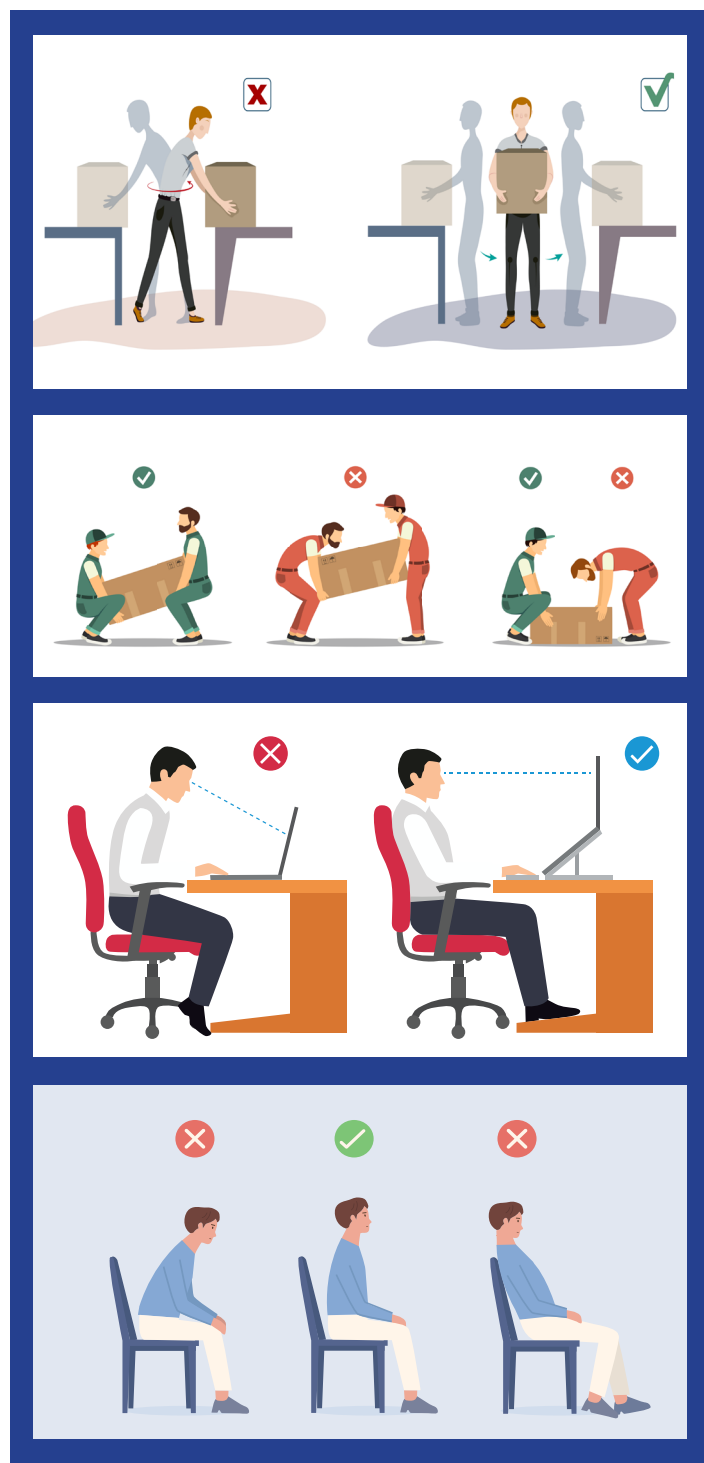
- **Reduce stress.**

Exercise is a proven stress reducer. Also, encourage workers to use their employee assistance program when dealing with personal or professional stress. Stress and mental distractions can increase the chances of back injury when employees do not pay attention and neglect safety.

- **Get a good night's sleep.**

A good night's sleep is essential for good health. Choose a firm mattress or place plywood between the mattress and box springs for extra support. Certain sleeping positions can help ease back pain. Sleeping on the side, knees bent with a pillow between the legs, or sleeping on the back with a pillow under the knees helps preserve the natural curve of the spine.

For more information on back pain and how to prevent it, stream any of DWC's free back injury prevention [videos](#) or contact an OSHA-authorized health and safety instructor to establish a safe lifting program at SafetyTraining@tdi.texas.gov or 1-800-252-7031, option 2.





www.txsafetyatwork.com

1-800-252-7031, Option 2

*The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC)-Workplace Safety
P.O. Box 12050
Austin, TX 78711-2050*

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