



Watch Your Back

Work-related back injuries are among the most common injuries that lead to lost workdays, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In order to avoid lower back injuries while lifting or performing other physical work, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Arlington Heights, IL, reminds workers to:

- Keep lifted objects close to the body at waist level. Evenly balance loads with both arms.
- Get help if the load is too bulky or heavy to lift alone, or split it into smaller or lighter loads.
- Take rest breaks to stand up, change position and stretch. Break tasks into shorter segments.
- Avoid twisting, bending and reaching while lifting. Instead, rotate the entire body.
- If lifting or moving a load, bend with the knees not the back.

Lifestyle changes also can ward off back injuries, the association said. Workers should:

- Exercise regularly to keep their back and abdominal muscles strong and flexible, and build activity tolerance.
- Choose healthy foods and maintain a proper weight.
- Drink plenty of water to stay well hydrated.
- Avoid smoking because it reduces the blood and fluid flow to the spine.
- Get sufficient sleep every day, and sleep on their sides or backs.

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