



STRAINS & SPRAINS SAFETY STAND-DOWN RESOURCES

KEEP IN CLEAN, WELL VENTILATED AND DRY PLACE
PROTECT FROM CONTAMINATION, DAMPNESS, INSECTS AND ODOORS



Relationships at Work

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Trending Topic

Strain, Sprain, and MSD (Musculoskeletal Disorder) Prevention

Strains, sprains, and tears were the *most common* non-fatal workplace injury type averaging approximately 11 days of lost time from work in 2019.* To help you and your employees prevent strain, sprain, and MSD related injuries, below are related links, tips and tools for quick reference.

Top Resources to Download and Customize: <https://go.ffvamutual.com/sprain-strain-msd-prevention>

- Back Injury Prevention and Safe Lifting Talk [English | Spanish]
- Back Safety Program
- Ergonomics Workstation Screening Checklist
- Safe Lifting Video
- Automotive Service Prevention of Strains and Sprains
- HVAC Contractors Prevention of Strains and Sprains [English | Spanish]

On-Demand Webcast

[Ergonomics: Fitting the Job to the Employee](#)

Related Blog Posts

[Ergonomics: Tips for Protecting Your Workers](#)

[Working from Home? 3 Ergonomic Tips to Make Your Space More Comfortable](#)

Additional Materials Available in *Safety Key*:

- Back Care and Proper Lifting [Webinar]
- Ergonomics: policy, program, screening worksheet and stand up desk tips
- Industry Specific Safety Program Guides
- Manual Lifting [Policy]
- Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Office [Meeting]
- Prevention of Strains and Sprains [English & Spanish] for Plumbing and Electrical Contractors

Related Services offered by FFVA Mutual's Safety Consultants at *No-Cost* for Policyholders:

- Facility and Job Site Safety Inspections
- Job Hazard Analysis
- Training in Proper Lifting and Ergonomics Awareness [Onsite and Online]

Quick Links:

Request a *Safety Key* login www.ffvamutual.com/safety-key-login-request

To view and Request our online and in-person safety training courses, visit www.ffvamutual.com/safety/safety-training-request

*Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



SAFETY TIPS

Preventing Strains and Sprains in the Workplace

A sprain is the stretching, tearing of ligaments, while a strain is the stretching, or tearing of muscles or tendons. These types of injuries can seriously affect and impede one's ability to perform daily tasks and are typically prone to re-injury. There are some things that we can do to reduce the potential for strains and sprains.

Make sure to get adequate sleep and rest and if you are feeling sick, weak, or more tired than usual, be sure to pay special attention to your body and do not over exert yourself. Strains and sprains are more likely when your body is physically tired. Be aware of your limitations, make appropriate adjustments in your work practices, and stay within your safe lifting capacity. Also, be more cognizant of body fatigue toward the second half of the day and when working in extreme heat or cold. If you are experiencing any type of back, shoulder, neck, or other joint pain or discomfort, notify a supervisor or manager before proceeding with any strenuous work, lifting, or material handling.

Preventing Strains and Sprains - Assess and evaluate how you work and consider the inherent risk factors involved in the tasks you are performing, focusing specifically on how **force**, **frequency**, and **posture/position** are involved in the tasks.

- The higher the **force** required to perform a task, the greater the potential for strains and sprains. Look at ways to reduce the amount of force needed to do the job and this can be done by using the proper tool or specialized tool/equipment, using penetrating oils and lubricants to loosen rust and corrosion in advance, and not just applying more force. Not only can overexertion and excessive use of force cause strains and sprains, but this can also cause serious lacerations and contusions when the tool slips or breaks, the bolt strips, or the part frees up.
- Focus on breaking up repetitive tasks to lower the **frequency**, change tasks frequently and take breaks to stretch and to allow your muscles to not be overworked. Use both sides of your body and both hands when doing repetitive tasks such as using ratchets and hand tools.
- Pay close attention to **position and posture** of your body while performing work tasks. Position the work to keep lifting around waist height with elbows close to the body, and to limit bending at the waist. When the task requires you to work in an awkward position, make sure to stretch before you start work, make sure your entire body is fully supported in the most comfortable position possible, take frequent breaks, and stretch before attempting manual lifting. Plan ahead and make sure to have all tools and materials within reach to reduce bending and lifting.

Tips for Preventing Strains and Sprains:

- Stretch out before starting work, when returning from breaks, and in between tasks. Stretch your back, arms, hands/wrists, shoulders, and neck. When working in an awkward position or awkward posture, make sure to take frequent breaks, stretch out frequently, and do not attempt lifting until you have stretched properly.
- Stay hydrated. Healthy muscles contain about 70% water, and dehydration can contribute to muscle fatigue and strains.
- Do not attempt to lift anything until you know how heavy the item is. Test the weight by lifting a corner slightly.

- Make sure you have necessary lifting aids depending on the work you will be performing. Plan ahead and make sure you have hand trucks, carts, hoists, or other material handling aids available before you start to work.
- If the job involves moving or lifting heavy or awkward items, plan ahead and make sure you have enough man power to use team lifting, and never attempt to lift heavy or awkward items by yourself.
- Plan your lifts before you start moving or lifting items. Check to make sure you have a clear path of travel before you start your lift. Check doorways to make sure the items will fit through comfortably.
- Never use excessive force when removing parts. Make sure you use the right tool for the job and to use the tools for the tasks they were designed for. Use penetrating oils and lubricants in advance to loosen stubborn parts. Do not use your hands as a hammer.
- Limit overhead work, and when working overhead, avoid having to work with elbows above your head for extended periods. Whenever possible or feasible, keep the work at waist height and do not overreach. When working overhead, position your body so that you can keep your elbows close to your body when performing your tasks by standing on an approved safe work platform, stepladder, or scaffolding. Never stand on buckets, crates, pallets or other non-approved or unstable work platform.

Use Proper Lifting Techniques

Before you lift

- Plan straightest, flattest, and clearest route to your destination.
- Look for places to stop and rest along the way.
- Remove any objects you might trip over.
- Try to have a waist-high surface for unloading.
- Make sure the area where you will unload is clear.
- Check the object you will be carrying for rough or jagged edges or slippery surfaces.
- Lift a corner of object to check weight and stability.
- Wear gloves with a good grip, safety shoes with reinforced toes and nonskid soles, and clothing that fits snugly.
- Warm up with gentle bends and stretches.

Lift correctly

- Stand close to load, with feet firmly on the floor, about shoulder width apart, with toes pointed out.
- Squat down close to the load with back straight, knees bent, stomach muscles tight.
- Place hands on diagonally opposite corners of the load so one hand pulls load towards you and one lifts.
- Grip load firmly with both entire hands, not just fingers.
- Bring load as close as possible to body. With weight centered over feet, tuck arms and elbows into side and chin into neck.
- Stand up slowly. Keep back straight and let legs do the lifting.
- Check for good grip and ability to see route.
- With load close to body and not above waist high, move forward with small steps.
- Change direction by moving feet, not by twisting.



SAFETY TIPS

Back Safety: Proper Lifting

When it comes to an effective back safety program, lifting properly is one of the key elements. Many back injuries occur when a person tries to lift a load that is too heavy or he/she lifts a load improperly. Improper lifting puts enormous strain on the back, neck, and shoulders and can lead to a variety of painful problems. Proper lifting techniques help to prevent back injuries.

When lifting an object, remember to always:

1. Stand close to the object with a wide stance. Feet should be shoulder-width apart, with toes pointing outward.
2. Bend at the knees and hips, and try to maintain your body's natural curve.
3. Pull the load close to you and grip it firmly.
4. Tighten your stomach, to act as a back support, and lift your head, which will help you lift with your legs rather than your back.
5. Finally, when you're ready to lift, use your legs and keep your back straight.

Try to practice this proper lifting technique, even if you're lifting a very light load.

A note about back belts: OSHA does not forbid the use of back belts nor does it endorse their use. According to OSHA, the effectiveness of back belts in the prevention of lower back injuries has not been proven.

If you suffer any type of back injury while on the job, contact your supervisor immediately. Injuries that are treated early often heal much faster than those that are ignored.



Musculoskeletal Disorders

Fitting Jobs to People

Ergonomics is the science of fitting jobs to the people who work in them. The goal of an ergonomics program is to reduce work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). Workers develop MSDs when a major part of their jobs involve reaching, bending over, lifting heavy objects, using continuous force, doing repetitive motions and working with vibrating equipment.

It is important for companies to look at all the jobs in their workplace to look for MSD hazards. Whenever and wherever ergonomic hazards are found, employers should take immediate steps to reduce them. They should also respond promptly to employee reports of job-related MSDs and help workers get the necessary attention from a health care professional as soon as possible. Some employers protect employee wages and benefits if it has been determined necessary to place workers on light duty for a period of time while their bodies heal or if they need to be off work as a result of an MSD. Here's what workers can do to control and eliminate MSD hazards:

- Report all MSD hazards to the supervisor right away. Employers need to know about them so they can take steps to protect everyone from the hazards.
- Report any signs or symptoms of MSDs. Employees must inform their supervisor immediately as they begin noticing symptoms of work-related MSDs.
- Take ergonomic training seriously. Training is designed to help protect workers from painful injuries. Employees will learn how to recognize ergonomic hazards and how to take action to avoid them and protect their health.
- Follow work rules and procedures. They have been set up to help prevent MSDs. Don't take chances and don't take shortcuts—the future may hold either good health or painful, debilitating injury, depending on whether people comply with the rules.

What are MSDs?

MSDs are injuries and illnesses that affect muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, or spinal disks. A physician may diagnose one or more of the following common MSDs:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Carpet layers' knee
- De Quervain's disease
- Epicondylitis
- Hand-arm vibration syndrome
- Herniated spinal disk
- Low back pain
- Raynaud's phenomenon
- Rotator cuff syndrome
- Sciatica
- Tendinitis
- Tension neck syndrome
- Trigger finger

What are the signs and symptoms of MSDs?

Workers suffering from MSDs may experience less strength for gripping and range of motion, loss of muscle function, and inability to do everyday tasks. Common symptoms that you should watch for include:

- Painful joints
- Pain, tingling, or numbness in hands or feet
- Shooting or stabbing pains in arms or legs
- Swelling or inflammation

- Burning sensation
- Pain in wrists, shoulders, forearms, or knees
- Fingers or toes turning white
- Back or neck pain
- Stiffness

What causes MSDs?

Workplace MSDs are caused by exposure to the following risk factors:

- **Repetition.** Making the same motions over and over again places stress on the muscles and tendons. The severity of risk depends on how often the action is repeated, the speed of the movement, the number of muscles involved, and the required force.
- **Forceful exertions.** Force is the amount of physical effort required to perform a task (such as heavy lifting) or to maintain control of equipment or tools. The amount of force depends on body posture, type of activity, type of grip, weight of the object, and duration of the task.
- **Awkward postures.** Posture is the position of the body that affects muscle groups involved in physical activity. Awkward postures include repeated or prolonged reaching, twisting, bending, kneeling, squatting, working overhead with hands or arms, or holding fixed positions.
- **Contact stress.** Pressing the body against a hard or sharp edge can result in placing too much pressure on nerves, tendons, and blood vessels. For example, using the palm of your hand as a hammer increases the likelihood of creating an MSD.
- **Vibration.** Operating vibrating tools such as sanders, grinders, chippers, routers, drills, or saws can lead to nerve damage.

By watching out for symptoms and examining how jobs are performed, you can save yourself from experiencing painful and expensive injuries.



Back Injury Prevention and Safe Lifting Talk

Develop good back-protection habits:

Exercise regularly for strong, flexible muscles and avoid being overweight, especially a pot belly.

Avoid or control stress.

Don't overestimate your own strength.

Walk, don't run, to prevent slips, trips, and falls.

Sleep on a firm mattress, either on your side with knees bent or on your back with knees elevated.

Seek alternatives to lifting:

Use equipment—hoists, hand trucks, dollies—rather than lifting, when possible.

Push, don't pull, loaded hand trucks or dollies.

Break a large load into several small ones.

Get a helper to lift heavy or awkward objects.

Plan jobs and work areas to minimize the need to move tools and materials.

Before you lift:

Plan straightest, flattest, and clearest route to your destination.

Look for places to stop and rest along the way.

Remove any objects you might trip over.

Try to have a waist-high surface for unloading.

Make sure the area where you'll unload is clear.

Check the object you'll be carrying for rough or jagged edges or slippery surfaces.

Lift a corner of object to check weight and stability.

Wear gloves with a good grip, safety shoes with reinforced toes and nonskid soles, and clothing that fits snugly.

Warm up with gentle bends and stretches.

Lift correctly:

Stand close to load, with feet firmly on the floor, about shoulder width apart, with toes pointed out.

Squat down close to the load with back straight, knees bent, stomach muscles tight.

Place hands on diagonally opposite corners of the load so one hand pulls load towards you and one lifts.

Grip load firmly with both entire hands, not just fingers.

Bring load as close as possible to body. With weight centered over feet, tuck arms and elbows into side and chin into neck.

Stand up slowly. Keep back straight and let legs do the lifting.

Check for good grip and ability to see route.

With load close to body and not above waist high, move forward with small steps.

Change direction by moving feet, not by twisting.

Unload properly:

Lower load slowly, with knees bent so legs do the work.

Position hands so fingers don't get caught under load.

Place load on edge of surface and slide it back.

Nonstandard loads and lifts:

Lift awkward shapes by squatting next to object with feet spread. Grip top outside corner and bottom inside corner. Then lift correctly.

Get as close as possible to objects in hard-to-get-at locations. Keep back straight, stomach muscles tight. Bend slightly forward at hips and bend knees. Grip object, then let leg, stomach, and buttock muscles lift.

Use ladder to reach objects in high places; work with a helper.

Lift to high places by breaking down load into smaller pieces. Lift object waist high, rest it on lower shelf or hip, bend knees, lift, and straighten up.

Push on object to be lowered to test weight and stability. If no help is needed, slide object as close as possible to body. Get a good grip and slide it down.

Match heights for two-person lift and decide who says where and when to move. Lift and rise together at signal, using proper technique. Keep load at same level, then move and unload together.

Sit properly:

Sit up straight, close to desk or table, back against chair back, knees bent and feet on floor.

Use cushion or rolled towel if needed to support lower back.

Turn whole body, don't twist, to reach to the side.

Hold pages upright while reading.

Lean elbow on desk while on phone; don't cradle phone in neck.

Break up long sitting periods with brief stretch and walk.

Shift sitting positions periodically.

Stand tall:

Stand tall and straight, not stiff.

Stand with shoulders even and back, head up, pelvis forward.

Raise one foot on elevation if standing at length in one place and shift feet periodically.

Other back-saving postures:

Drive with back straight, knees bent.

Work on back with back flat, knees bent; get up and stretch periodically.

Shovel with hands far apart, back straight, legs bent at knees so they do the work.

To work near the ground, bend knees and not waist, with back as straight as possible.

Catch falling objects standing with back straight, knees bent, feet firmly on ground. Let legs absorb impact during catch.

Don't jump, even from a short height; use ladder or steps.

Play it safe:

Never ignore back pain. Stop activity, rest, and report it.



Preventing Ergonomic Issues in the Workplace

When it comes to working comfortably, our bodies are very good at giving physical warning signs. It's important to pay attention to how you feel and take preventative action if needed. To stay injury free, remember this ergonomic advice: make your workspace fit your body and not the other way around.

Below are workplace ergonomic tips:

- Avoid exerting a lot of force or while working.
- Get proper rest and take breaks.
- Keep frequently used items close to avoid twisting or turning.
- Lift with your legs – never your back.
- Make sure work areas are well lit.
- Reduce stressful movements.
- Use the right tools and setup for the job.
- Vary your tasks.
- Work in a neutral posture.

Desktop worker tips:

- Assume a relaxed, tension-free posture in your neck and shoulders.
- Ensure you have adequate lower-back support.
- Keep your knees and hips at 90-degree angles.
- Keep your wrists in a neutral position, protected from sharp or hard edges.
- Make sure the height of your work surface is appropriate.
- Make sure the mouse is at the same height and distance from the screen as the keyboard.
- Make sure you can easily read the text on your screen.
- Place your elbows at a 90-degree angle.
- Position your feet flat on the floor or support them with a footrest.
- Sit the correct distance from the monitor – about 25 inches.

And don't forget to stretch throughout the day! Regular stretching gives your body the necessary breaks it needs. Consider group stretch breaks with your co-workers – especially during extended projects or meetings.

SPRAINS AND STRAINS PREVENTION TOOLBOX SAFETY TALK

Sprains and strains account for about a third of injuries in construction. A **sprain** is an injury to a ligament, the tough, fibrous tissue that connects bones to other bones. Sprain injuries involve a stretching or a tearing of this tissue. Ankle, knee and wrist injuries account for the majority of sprains. A **strain** is an injury to either a muscle or a tendon, the tissue that connects muscles to bones. Back injuries are the most prevalent in regard to strains. Depending on the severity of the injury, a strain may be a simple overstretch of the muscle or tendon, or it can result in a partial or complete tear.

These soft tissue injuries occur frequently, and are painful, disabling and often accompanied by lengthy recovery periods. Maintaining good physical fitness is essential in avoiding sprains and strains.

To minimize the chances of **sprains**, observe the following practices:

1. Practice safety measures to help prevent falls. For example, practice safe housekeeping by keeping work areas clear of clutter.
2. Avoid strenuous activity on the job when tired or in pain.
3. Use extra caution when working on slippery surfaces such as ice or wet floors.
4. Always wear appropriate and proper fitting footwear for your job.
5. Use extra caution when walking across uneven surfaces. These are areas where you could easily turn or twist an ankle or knee.
6. When stepping off ladders, always look where you are placing your feet, before you put your full weight on them.

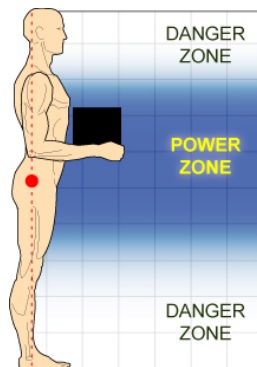
To minimize the possibility of incurring **strains**, observe the following practices:

1. Be certain that you understand your employer's Material Handling Safety program.
2. Whenever possible, arrange your work areas to minimize the amount of heavy lifting required.
3. Before any heavy lifting activity, always warm up, using moderate stretching exercises. Do not stretch aggressively as you may over-stretch and injure yourself.

4. Always plan the lift. Consider the weight of the object; how far you must carry it and your route of travel. When you approach an object on the floor, try to get an idea of how heavy it may be by moving it with your foot or cautiously lifting it off the ground. If the object is too heavy, seek additional help or use a mechanical lifting device such as a forklift, hand truck or winch.



5. Lift objects in the “power zone”. This is the area between mid-thigh and mid-chest height. Avoid lifting objects outside this zone. Use your best judgment when lifting heavy objects. Do not attempt to lift an object that exceeds your strength, and use extreme caution when lifting objects exceeding 50 lbs.



6. Always carry objects close to your body.
7. Always lift slowly and smoothly.
8. Avoid twisting. Always turn the whole body as one unit when changing direction while carrying a heavy object.
9. Move heavy objects by pushing or pulling, whenever possible. Pushing is always preferable.
10. Always stand close to the object that you are lifting and be certain that fingers and toes are clear when setting it down.
11. Always lift with you legs and not your back.

Follow these helpful rules and you will greatly reduce the chance that you will experience a painful sprain or strain.

What this talk covers:
Key rules for the prevention of sprains and strains on the job.

Discussion notes:
Whenever possible, use examples of real-life situations that resulted in sprains or strains

Review Questions: True/False

1. It is always better to lift and carry an object, even when it is possible to push or pull it.
FALSE: Whenever possible, it is better to push or pull an object.

2. Good physical conditioning is not important to preventing sprains and strains.
FALSE: Good physical conditioning is essential to strengthen muscles and reducing weight which makes you less vulnerable to sprains and strains.

3. For objects exceeding 50 lbs., lift using the buddy system or use a mechanical lifting device.
TRUE

Talk given by: _____

Date: _____

Company: _____

Printed Name	Signature

References:

- North Carolina Department of Labor – Sprains and Strains Fact Sheet (2009): http://www.nclabor.com/osha/etta/A_to_Z_Topics/Sprains.pdf
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Construction Workers (2007): <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2007-122/>

Through the OSHA Alliance Program’s Construction Roundtable, the Roundtable participants developed this product for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. May 2010

Strains, Sprains and Material Handling Safety Tips for Employers

Construction is a physically demanding occupation. Improper manual handling of material may cause common injuries such as strains and sprains that result in lost workdays. Strains and sprains make up about a third of non-fatal injuries in construction. Here are some tips for the reduction of sprains and strains.

1. Pre-plan the job with the human interface in mind to minimize manual material handling hazards such as heavy and repetitive lifting, repetitive reaching, and carrying of material. The human interface is when a person lifts, lowers, carries, pushes, or pulls, material, tools, or equipment. A pallet jack, fork lift, or other mechanical means should be considered as the first alternative during the pre-planning.
2. Develop protocols for handling material on the jobsite. Try to eliminate heavy lifting, bending, and reaching.
 - Stage materials close to where they will be used
 - Stage materials off the ground preferably at waist height, especially items that are heavy or frequently used, to prevent stress. Determine if the material can be raised from ground level even if it only a small percentage of the time. Simple solutions such as strapping three to four pallets together or using saw horses with plywood to raise materials off the ground can have great effect.
 - When possible, use platform ladders or scaffolds where the workers can turn their feet and the body to eliminate twisting and reaching.
 - Position scissor lifts at the proper working height when possible. Many workers get in habit of working overhead more than they have too.
 - Have material delivered in small quantities that weighs less and is easier to use.
 - Arrange for tools such as forklifts, pallet jacks, or carry alls to reach material positioned out of the power zone and also to move heavy material.
 - Use low vibration tools. Compare vibration levels from different vendors before purchase.
 - Plan to minimize high force, awkward postures, and vibration by providing assists such as hand carts, motorized carts, dollies, power hand tools, anti vibration gloves, and floating seats.
3. Conduct regular material handling and lifting inspections. Look for places where the principles discussed above are violated such as:
 - Materials (conduit, connectors, elbows, etc.) placed on the floor or ground.
 - Tools or equipment on the ground or floor (i.e., chop saw on ground).
 - Work methods that encourage repetition or awkward postures. For example, how many times does a worker unnecessarily pick up material off the ground and then place it back on the ground before making final installation?
 - Trailers or conex boxes improperly laid out and labeled, with heavy items or repeatedly used items stored on the top and bottom shelves.
4. Where possible, incorporate variety into the job so workers can perform less stressful tasks which utilize different muscle groups following heavy lifting, bending and carrying. It is desirable to alternate between higher periods of stress and less stressful periods to allow the body to recover and thus reduce the cumulative trauma to the body.
5. Encourage workers to warm-up by performing the motions they will use on the job for a few minutes before full exertion. Consider bringing in a professional (e.g., ergonomist, exercise therapist, or physical therapist) to help start and monitor any warm up and range of motion program.

6. Provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as vibration damping gloves and gel knee pads.
7. Train workers on the proper techniques for lifting, bending and carrying. For example:
 - Don't twist when lifting.
 - Keep the load close to the body. If possible, arrange for work to be done in the power zone. (The power zone for lifting is close to the body, between mid-thigh and mid-chest height.)
 - Grip the load firmly with your whole hand, not just your fingers.
 - Lift in a smooth motion, don't jerk
 - Use two people to handle loads heavier than about 40 to 50 pounds. If the load looks like more than you can handle, get help either from another person or by using a mechanical lifting/moving aid. Being macho and getting injured is just plain stupid. If the load can be divided into smaller units that can be safely handled, do so.

This Safety Tips Sheet was developed through the Construction Roundtable of OSHA's Alliance Program for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. Oct. 2010. For more information from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA): Visit OSHA's Website at www.osha.gov or call 1-800- 321-OSHA.

Strains, Sprains and Material Handling Safety Tips for Workers

Strains and sprains are painful injuries that result from improper material handling techniques. These injuries could eventually end your career. Here are some tips to help you avoid unnecessary strains and sprains.

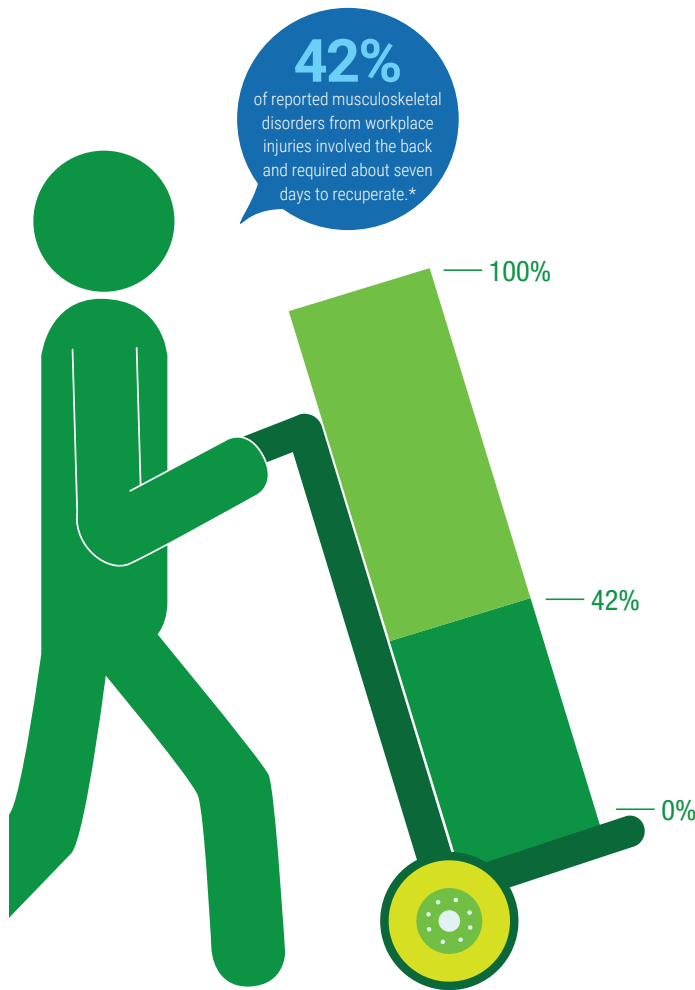
1. Read and understand your company's procedure for handling material. Ask about any policy you don't understand.
2. Speak up about ways work could be modified to make it safer.
3. Plan the job to minimize manual handling.
4. Use mechanical equipment to lift and carry material when possible.
5. Pushing or pulling using a cart or hand truck is preferable to carrying; pushing is preferable to pulling.
6. Participate in your employer's education and training on proper techniques for lifting, bending, and carrying.
7. Minimize repetition, force, exertion, awkward positions and vibration where possible. For example, use assists such as hand carts, motorized carts, dollies, power hand tools, anti vibration gloves, and floating seats.
8. Try to work at waist height as much as possible. Use a ladder or work platform to prevent stretching and bending. Using a platform or platform ladder allows you to turn your feet and body, which changes your reaching position and angle.
9. Use proper techniques for lifting, bending and carrying. For example:
 - Don't twist when lifting.
 - Keep the load close to the body. If possible, arrange for work to be done in the power zone. (The power zone for lifting is close to the body, between mid-thigh and mid-chest height.)
 - Grip the load firmly with your whole hand, not just your fingers.
 - Lift in a smooth motion, don't jerk
 - Use two people to handle loads heavier than 40 to 50 pounds. If the load looks like more than you can handle, get help either from another person or by using a mechanical lifting/moving aid. Being macho and getting injured is just plain stupid. If the load can be divided into smaller units that can be safely handled, do so.
10. Participate in warm up activities before heavy lifting.
11. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as vibration damping gloves and gel knee pads when completing the job task. Back belts are not considered to be effective in preventing injuries.
12. Report all injuries immediately, even if they may not at first appear to be serious.

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BACK 2 BASICS

A common sense approach to avoiding back injuries



1 Stay fit



Tone your muscles. Exercise your abdominal and leg muscles. The stronger they are, the less your back has to work.

Lose extra pounds. Excess weight can exaggerate the curve of the spine and strain the back.

Stand up straight. Try to keep your ears, shoulders and hips in a straight line.

2 Lift right



Ask yourself: Do I really need to lift? If yes, then assess the lifting operation considering the task, the load, the individual capability and the environment.

Get help. If the object is too heavy to lift by yourself, ask a coworker for assistance.

Keep your back straight if you have to squat. Also, bend at the knees and keep the load close to you.

Avoid twisting. To lift and turn, point a foot in the direction you want to go before lifting.



Visit [nsc.org](https://www.nsc.org) for more resources.

On-The-Job Injuries

Work smarter, not harder

- Let supervisors know if you're hurting
- Use anti-fatigue mats if standing for a long time
- Alternate repetitive and non-repetitive tasks
- Switch between manual and sedentary tasks
- Alternate using different muscle groups
- Increase breaks from repetitive work
- Help identify risk factors and problems and suggest solutions

Risk factors include...

- Lifting heavy items
- Bending
- Reaching overhead
- Pushing and pulling heavy loads
- Working in awkward body postures
- Performing repetitive tasks
- Using vibrating tools and machinery



Visit nsc.org for more resources.

Give Yourself a Break

Taking ergo stretch breaks throughout the day can help reduce muscle tension, relieve discomfort and increase blood flow. **Here are three to try:**

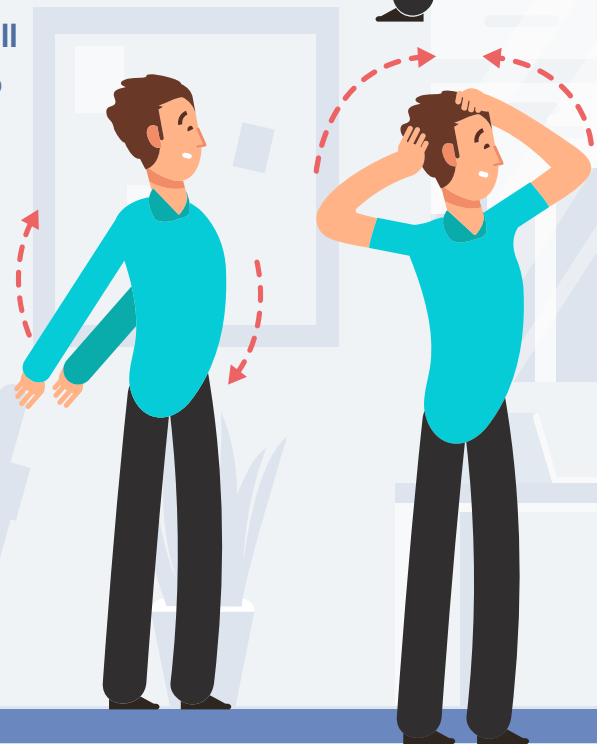
Hamstring Stretch –

Place one foot forward, knee straight and your heel on the ground. Look up at the ceiling and bend forward at the hips. Then do the same with the other leg.



Shoulder Stretch –

Hold both hands behind your back and grasp your right wrist with your left hand. **Gently pull on your right arm, while turning your head to the left.** Hold for a count of 10. Then switch arms and repeat.



Pillar Stretch –

Raise your arms overhead, pushing them behind your head and interlock your fingers. **Keep your elbows straight and hold for a count of 10.**

Whether you sit at a computer all day, lift heavy loads or travel for long periods, make ergo stretch breaks a part of your daily routine.

Source: National Safety Council

For more information, visit nsc.org


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