

BACK INJURIES

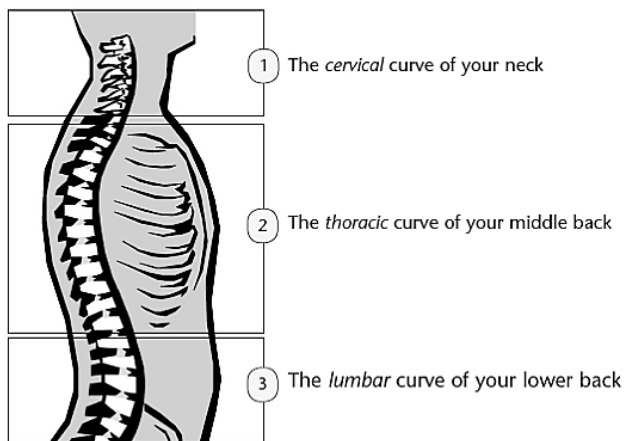
Back injuries are some of the most prevalent and hardest-to-prevent injuries on the job. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 1 million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses. These types of injuries account for a large majority of worker's compensation claims every year.

Back Injuries Occur When:

- An individual is lifting up an object
- Using improper lifting techniques such as lifting with the back and not the legs
- Lifting an object that is too heavy for the individual
- Twisting while lifting or carrying objects
- Repetitive lifting during a work task

Back Injury Prevention: How To Protect Your Back

The healthy spine is made of stacked vertebrae aligned in three natural curves:



When you maintain these three natural curves in their normal alignment, your weight is evenly distributed throughout the vertebrae and disks. This way your back is least vulnerable to injury. Your three curves are correctly aligned when your ears, shoulders, and hips are in a straight line.

Helpful hints to protect your back.

Pushing and Pulling:

- Stay close to the load, don't lean forward.
- Whenever possible, push rather than pull.
- Use both arms when pushing objects.
- Tighten your stomach muscles when pushing.

Bending:

- Kneel down on one knee.
- Maintain your natural S curve of your back.
- Bend knees and hips, not your back.

Lifting:

- Test the weight of the load before lifting.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Bend your knees and hips.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles when you lift. They help support your back.
- Lift with your legs and buttocks.
- Maintain your natural S curve of your back.
- Avoid twisting as you lift.

Reaching:

- Reach only as high as is comfortable, but don't stretch above shoulder level.
- Use a stool if you need it.
- Let your arms and legs do the work, not your back.

Repetitive Motions:

- Keep the loads small.
- Turn your whole body instead of twisting.
- Get close to the load, don't reach and lift.
- Lift with your arms and legs, not your back.
- Change positions frequently.

Avoid Twisting:

- Kneel down on one knee.
- Maintain your natural S curve of your back.
- Remember - your toes follow your nose, pivot your feet.

Discussion Points:

- Are there hazardous lifts we can eliminate in our daily operations?
- Are we using engineering controls when we cannot eliminate a lift or are we just completing the lifts without looking at a safer way to do them?

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