



Five Leading Back Injury Risk Factors

1. **Poor Posture** – Maintaining the back and upper body in correct alignment is critical to reducing muscle strain and spinal damage. Your back has a natural “S” curve that should be maintained at all times. Avoid slouching or static awkward positions when sitting or standing for long periods of time. When lifting, use the leg muscles for the initial lift, avoid twisting, don’t arch the back.
2. **Lack of Conditioning** – Like any muscle, when proper muscle tone is maintained, fewer problems occur when performing manual labor. Weight training, stretching, warming up and cooling down are all good measures to maintain a healthy back. Conditioned muscles help reduce the risk of soft tissue injury, and help support the correct natural posture of the spinal column.
3. **Obesity** – Carrying excessive weight, particularly around the abdomen, creates numerous problems, such as greater risk of back sprain or strain and decreased range of motion. Imagine trying to work all day with an inner tube around your waist. Lose that spare tire and you’ll reduce stress on your back, particularly the injury-prone lumbar region.
4. **Failure to Use Mechanical Lifting Aids** – Handcarts, pallet jacks, forklifts, hoists and medical patient lifts are all examples mechanical devices that help us move materials (or people) and should be used whenever possible. The safest way to lift is to use the mechanical aids available and reduce the stress on our back.
5. **Rushing to Lift** - The most important thing we need to do before we perform manual material handling is to think first: Are mechanical lifting aids available? Should I ask a team member for help? Have I cleared a path to my destination? Is this something that needs to be moved? No lifting is so critical that we cannot take a moment to consider safe options for moving materials.

Think before you lift!

- Are mechanical lifting aids available?
- Should I ask a team member for help?
- Have I cleared a path to my destination?
- Is this something that needs to be moved?

For more information about workplace safety, visit AccidentFund.com/worksafe.