

SAFETY BULLETIN – BACK SAFETY

Risk Factors For Back Injuries

Risk factors are what increase a person's likelihood of experiencing an injury. The primary factors associated with experiencing a back disorder include posture, force, repetition and smoking.

Posture/Position

The positions in which the body is used increase the physical demands of the task. Nearly all postures are okay for a limited amount of time. However, staying in these postures for extended periods can cause problems to develop.

Force

Force includes the amount of the load the body is trying to lift, and includes the weight of the object being lifted and the weight of the body. There are always forces acting on the body.

Repetition

Repetition refers to the number of times an activity is performed. Repetition can cause body parts wear out faster, especially if poor posture and a fair amount of force are also involved.

Smoking

Studies have demonstrated that smoking (nicotine) has a negative impact on the health of the back, and that smokers take longer to recover from back disorders than non-smokers.

Back Injury Prevention

- Use proper lifting techniques. This helps the body stay in the best postures for back safety.
Proper lifting techniques:
 - Keep the load as close your body as possible.
 - Bend your knees instead of your waist.
 - Avoid twisting your back.
- Change postures periodically during the day to avoid being in awkward postures for too long.
- Reduce the force on the back:
 - Get help from others.
 - Use lifting and carrying aids such as carts.
 - Use the best postures possible, whether sitting, standing, lifting, or reclining. When posture changes from good to bad, the force on the back increases, even if nothing other than the body is being lifted.
- During repetitive activities:
 - Take periodic micro-breaks.
 - Compensate by performing brief stretches.
 - Work in the best postures the job allows.
- Consider quitting or cutting down on smoking when recovering from a back disorder. Studies indicate this will speed up the recovery process.