



HEALTH INFORMATION

Manual handling

Manual handling is a major cause of back injuries and in many cases can be prevented by good handling techniques. The back allows you to walk, sit, stand, lift, bend, work, sleep and other physical activities. When there is a problem or injury there is pain, lost time, expense, inconvenience and disability.

The back is made up of 33 bones or vertebrae. The upper 24 are separated by discs that act as cushions which are linked by joints. The spine has a natural curve which makes it stronger and more flexible. The spinal cord is the nerve which directs all the activities below the neck. Nerves branch from the spinal cord in 31 pairs sending messages between the brain and other parts of the body. Muscles allow movement in various directions and there are about 400 in the back. The muscles support the spine.

A poor physical condition

can make it likely that an injury will occur. Poor posture, slouching, rounded shoulders and standing or walking with one hip higher than the other can result in too much forward curve in the lower back. This can be resolved by keeping head up, stomach in and chest relaxed and spreading your weight evenly on both feet.

Being over weight

and carrying extra weight, especially around the stomach, puts constant pull on the back muscles. This stretches and weakens the stomach muscles, adding to back problems. Eating a well balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and cutting down on fatty foods, salt, sugar and alcohol can help.

Lack of exercise-

back problems can occur when the stomach and back muscles become weak as they cannot support the spine well and this can affect posture. Simple exercises such as walking, swimming and pilates can help.

Continuous strains

can weaken back muscles. Standing and sitting partly bent over for long periods can damage the muscles.

Changing the posture often can help to relieve stress on the body. Adjust the work area so that it is more suitable avoiding slumping or over-reaching. Keep equipment you use regularly close, to avoid over reaching and over-stretching. Stand and sit as close as possible to the task but make sure you are comfortable.

ALWAYS CHECK YOUR POSTURE.

Stand with your head up, stomach in and chest relaxed, spreading the weight on your feet evenly. When sitting, sit back so the lower back is supported and the weight spread evenly over the hips.

Take regular breaks and stretch to allow the shoulders and neck muscles to relax.



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How to stay active

Find a balance between being active and not putting too much strain on the back.

- Keep moving
- Do not stay in one position for too long
- Move about before you get stiff
- Move a little further and faster each day
- Don't stop doing things just change the way you do them.

Manual handling techniques

- Stop and think!
- Consider if you have to move the item first, if so, what equipment is available, for example a trolley or hoist.
- Check the risk assessment and what you need to know to undertake the task safely.
- Examine the object, check the load to find out if it is too heavy or awkward.
- Follow the instructions that make the task safe
- Get help if required.

What to do if you get Back pain

- If caused by a condition at work or aggravated by activities at work, you should report this to your supervisor.
- Consult your GP if worried.
- Take pain relief, modify activity for a time if necessary, but stay active.
- Get back to normal activities as soon as possible, activity is good.
- Heat and cold can be used for short term relief of pain and help to relax muscle tension. In the first 48 hours try 5-10 minutes at a time.