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SAFE LIFTING

Back injuries are one of the most common workplace injuries in Manitoba, and may be long and painful to recover from. Unfortunately, suffering one back injury puts you at a greater risk of suffering another.

The most important thing you can do to prevent a back injury is to use proper lifting and material handling techniques. (If you are suffering back pain, contact your physician for more information.)

This bulletin discusses why back injuries occur, and how to prevent them.

<u>Lifting Hazards</u>:

- **Awkward / Sustained posture** - Improper lifting technique is the largest cause of lower back injuries. For example, bending at the waist, or twisting while holding anything greatly increases the stress on the muscles and joints of the back.

- **Forceful exertions** - There is a limit to the amount of weight the back can lift; this limit is different for each person. Know and respect your limits. Use mechanical aids wherever possible, i.e. cranes, carts, dollies, etc.

- **Repetitive movements** - Repeated actions cause fatigue; fatigue reduces the amount of weight the body can safely lift. Be sure to give the back adequate rest between lifts.
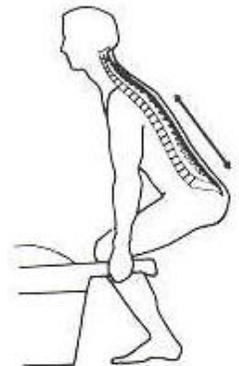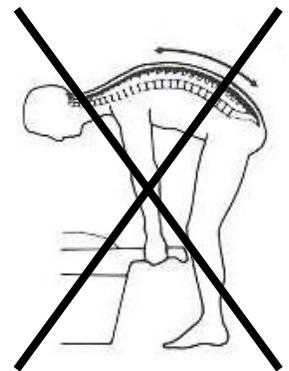
<u>Preventing Back Injuries</u>:

Spot the hazard
– What conditions prevent you from using safe lifting techniques?
– Is the load heavy, awkward or hard to hold?
– Is your back tired before the end of your shift?

Assess the risk
– Test the weight of the load before lifting
– Is your back sore or tired before the lift?
– Did you clear your path of obstacles and debris?

Find a safer way
– Always use good lift techniques
– Never twist your back with weight in your hands
– Use or ask for a mechanical lift
– Ask for help with the lift

Everyday
– It is your right to be safe at work
– Taking short cuts increases the chance you will be hurt
– Think about lifting safely

BACK BELTS – CAUTION!
A back belt is a medical device and should be used under the direction of a health care provider. *In other words, the decision to wear a back belt is a personal choice not to be influenced by workplace parties*. (See more information on page 2)

Lift Training:

Employers have a duty under the Act to provide workers with information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure their safety and health on the job.

Step 1: Ready the worker for training	Step 2: Exhibit and explain
• Obtain the focus of the worker • Determine the worker's current level of knowledge regarding lifting • Position the worker so they share your physical point of view as you are teaching the skill or procedure	• Show the worker each movement and procedure you expect them to know, step-by-step • Emphasize the important points, i.e. no twisting & lifting with the legs • Explain clearly and entirely
Step 3: Observe and examine	**Step 4: Monitor the worker**
• Require the worker to demonstrate each skill back to you along with a verbal explanation of the demonstration • Watch the worker's demonstration; comment on all effective and ineffective movements and/or procedures • Demonstrate for the worker again, if needed • Have the worker demonstrate again; continue this practice until the worker understands how, and is able to, carry out the task effectively	• Explain where to receive further instruction • Allow the worker to perform the work unassisted • Review the worker's understanding after a few days or a week • Monitor the worker daily until you are confident the proper lifting techniques have become standard practice

Proper Lifting technique:

The following is for informational purposes only. No warranties or guarantees are made on the usage of this information.

1) Test the weight of the load
   - If it feels too heavy ask for help, or use a mechanical lifting device
   - It is your legal right to refuse to lift anything you feel may be a danger to you
2) Position your body close to the load
3) Take a wide stance, with the load between the knees if possible
4) BEND YOUR KNEES
5) Bending at the waist should never be permitted
   - Never try to catch a falling load
6) Keep the lower back straight
   The risk of injury increases when the lower back is rounded

7) Keep your head up, the more vertical your posture, the lower your risk of injury
8) Breathe out as you begin to lift
   - This increases tension in your abdominal muscles
   - Do not hold your breath during a lift; this increases pressure in the abdomen
9) Always keep your shoulders in line with your feet
   - Twisting significantly increases the risk of injury
   - Never twist while lifting or carrying anything, even light objects
   - NO TWISTING!
10) Proper lowering is as important as proper lifting
   - Dropping or throwing loads is hazardous
   - Bend the knees, keep the back straight, and breathe out as you begin to llower.

BACK BELTS – CAUTION!

1. Back belts <u>are not</u> considered personal protective equipment.

2. The use of back belts <u>has not</u> been proven to reduce the risk of lower-back injury from repetitive lifting, bending, twisting, pushing or pulling.

3. Back belts <u>do not</u> significantly improve lifting capacity.

4. Back belts <u>have not</u> been shown to remind workers to use proper lifting technique.

Sample of one type of back belt

5. Back belts <u>have not</u> been shown to cause workers to avoid heavy lifting.

   Manually handling heavy loads is known to increase the risk of injury to the lower-back.

6. Back belts <u>were not</u> originally designed for workplace injury prevention, but rather for medical rehabilitation purposes, and later adapted to specific weight-training applications.