

By the Numbers – Back Injury

DID YOU KNOW?

15 Back Injury Statistics

1. About 80% of adults are estimated to experience a back injury in their lifetime... with roughly 10% suffering a re-injury.
2. More than one million back injuries are sustained in the workplace every year
3. .Back injuries account for one in every five injuries and illnesses in the workplace.
4. 80% of these injuries are associated with manual materials handling tasks.
5. Seven occupations accounted for more than 25% of ergonomic injuries, with Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Nursing Assistants, Janitors and Cleaners, Registered Nurses, Maintenance and Repair Workers.
6. Back injuries are the most common reason for nonattendance in the general workforce, after the common cold.
7. Up to 1/3 of back injuries could be prevented through a better designed job workspace.
8. Low back pain is the single leading cause of disability worldwide.
9. Back injuries made up 41% of ergonomic injury cases.
10. Back disorders account for over 24% of all occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work.
11. Workers who suffered ergonomic injuries required an average of 12 days to recuperate before returning to work.
12. Workers in the Healthcare industry sustain 4.5 times more overexertion injuries than any other type of worker.
13. Work-related back injuries and illnesses are caused mainly by repeated lifting of materials, sudden movements, whole body vibration, lifting and twisting at the same time, or bending over for long periods of time, rather than major

illness.

14. Low back pain is 7.7% more common in high-income areas of North America.

15. More than \$50 billion is spent each year trying to treat back again.

- According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, back injuries account for nearly 20 percent of all injuries and illnesses in the workplace. In fact, only the common cold accounts for more lost work days.

KEEP IN MIND

Although there is not a specific regulation for training employees on back safety, the General Duty Clause does require employers to provide employees with a workplace that is “free of recognized hazards,” and given the prevalence of back injuries in the workplace – it’s hard to not see it as a “recognized hazard.”

In fact, a back-safety program is key to dramatically reducing debilitating back injuries on the job.

Disabling back injuries are costly and all too prevalent. That’s why your company needs more than a quick fix approach to battling back pain.

Whether it’s dull and achy or sharp and stabbing, back pain can make it hard to concentrate on your job. Unfortunately, many occupations – such as nursing, construction and factory work – can place significant demands on your back. Even routine office work can cause or worsen back pain. Understand what causes back pain at work and what you can do to prevent it.

A number of factors can contribute to back pain at work. For example:

- Force. Exerting too much force on your back – such as by lifting or moving heavy objects – can cause injury.
- Repetition. Repeating certain movements, especially those that involve twisting or rotating your spine, can injure your back.
- Inactivity. An inactive job or a desk job can contribute to

back pain, especially if you have poor posture or sit all day in a chair with inadequate back support.

Back pain and lifestyle factors

Of course, factors such as aging, obesity and poor physical condition also can contribute to back pain. While you can't control your age, you can focus on maintaining a healthy weight, which minimizes stress on your back.

Start by eating a healthy diet. Make sure you get enough calcium and vitamin D. These nutrients can help prevent osteoporosis, a condition that causes your bones to become weak and brittle and is responsible for many of the bone fractures that lead to back pain.

Combine aerobic exercise, such as swimming or walking, with exercises that strengthen and stretch your back muscles and abdomen. Exercises that increase your balance and strength can also decrease your risk of falling and injuring your back. Consider tai chi, yoga and weight-bearing exercises that challenge your balance.

For most healthy adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity – preferably spread throughout the week – and strength training exercises at least twice a week.

Also, if you smoke, quit. Smoking reduces blood flow to your lower spine, which can contribute to spinal disc degeneration and slow healing from back injuries. Coughing associated with smoking can also cause back pain.