7 MINUTE Safety Trainer

Avoid Back Pain by Safe Lifting

GOALS

This safety session should teach employees to:

- Realize how common lower back pain really is.
- Know some things they can do to minimize their risk of back injuries.

Applicable Regulations: None

1. **How high is your risk? Ask yourself:**
   - Does my job require frequent bending and lifting?
   - Do I have home duties, like caring for an ill family member or moving heavy furniture, that can strain my back?
   - Am I overweight?
   - Do I exercise infrequently?
   - Do I smoke?
     - "Yes" answers to these questions mean you may be at an above-average risk for back problems.
   - Back injuries are among the most common of all injuries. They range from minor muscle strains to serious and permanent damage. Unfortunately, a serious back injury can mean a lifetime of back pain.
2. **Most of you have heard all this before—you probably know the proper way to lift—but do you follow the rules?**
   - Estimate whether it is really safe to lift an object by yourself.
     - Can you use a dolly or handcart to avoid manually lifting the object?
     - Can someone else assist you?
   - Plan the lift and get set with feet about shoulder-width apart to give yourself a good base of support.
     - Get close to the object to be lifted.
     - Bend your legs—don't bend over at the waist—tighten your stomach muscles, and use your leg muscles to help you lift.
3. **Follow through with the lift properly.**
   - Don't twist your body—instead, turn your feet in the direction you want to go.
   - To place an object on a higher level, move close to the destination, climb on a step stool if necessary—put the object in place while extending your arms as little as possible.
   - If you are moving something from a higher level, use a step stool so the object is not above your shoulder height when you make the actual lift. Dismount carefully and complete the move.
4. **You can reduce your risk factors for back injury.**
   - Speak to your doctor about starting an exercise or diet program to improve your overall health and fitness level.
   - Start any program slowly, and gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts.

©BLR®—Business & Legal Resources

Avoid Back Pain by Safe Lifting

- If you experience pain, heed the warning and stop. If the pain is severe or persists, seek professional advice. If it is mild and goes away quickly, you might simply wait a few days and then try a less strenuous program.
- Take action now and quit smoking. Your doctor can offer advice about this as well, and there are many groups in the community ready to assist you.

5. Analyze your work and home activities to minimize your risk.

- Use dollies or other available lifting devices.
- Try to keep all lifting between knuckle height when standing and shoulder height.
- Whenever possible, begin your lift with the object in that height range and move to a destination at a similar height.
- Lifts that begin or end either at floor height or with an object above your shoulders are the most likely to cause injury or back stress.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Are there things that you, *personally*, feel you should do to minimize your risk of back injury and pain?
- Are there changes that can be made, *here in the workplace*, to reduce the need for manual lifting of heavy objects?

CONCLUSION:

Knowing the rules about safe lifting is the first step. The most important second step, however, is applying this knowledge to your everyday activities.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your employees take the Avoid Back Pain by Safe Lifting quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can assess their ability to obey the rules for safe lifting and determine whether they need to review this important topic again soon.

©BLR®—Business & Legal Resources