

Back Safety Awareness Training

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Introduction

This module will equip you with essential knowledge to prevent back injuries, which are a leading cause of workplace disability.

In Canada, four out of five adults will experience back pain at some point.

By learning proper lifting techniques, posture, and ergonomic practices, you can significantly reduce the risk of injury

Anatomy of the Back and Spine

The spine is composed of 33 vertebrae, which are small bones stacked on top of each other.

Between each vertebra, there are discs that act as cushions and absorb shock.

Muscles and ligaments support the spine and provide movement.

The spine has three natural curves:

- the cervical curve (in the neck)
- the thoracic curve (in the upper back)
- the lumbar curve (in the lower back)

These help maintain balance, distribute weight, and absorb the impact of daily activities.

Common Causes of Back Injuries

Without proper lifting techniques, back injuries are more likely to occur. The most common types of back injuries include:

- Strains
- Sprains
- Herniated discs
- Fractures

Back injuries can happen for many reasons, the most common causes of back injuries include:

- Poor posture
- Improper lifting techniques
- Repetitive motions
- Prolonged sitting or standing
- Sudden movements or falls

Identifying Hazards

Hazards can come in many forms, some more apparent than others. Being able to identify the hazards can reduce your risk of injury.

Warehouse Hazards:

- Heavy Lifting
- Repetitive tasks
- Awkward postures
- Slippery or uneven surfaces

Office Hazards:

- Poor ergonomic setup
- Prolonged sitting
- Inadequate chair support
- Reaching for items

Proper Lifting Techniques

By knowing how to properly assess and lift an object, you can protect your back and spine.

Here are the steps you can follow to ensure you are lifting properly:

1. **Asses the load** - Check the weight and stability of the object
2. **Plan the lift** - Determine the best way to lift the object and where to place the object
3. **Use proper body mechanics:**
 - Stand close to the object with feet shoulder-width apart
 - Bend at the knees, no the waist
 - Keep your back straight and head up
 - Lift with your legs, not your back
 - Hold the object close to your body
4. **Avoid twisting** - Turn your whole body instead of twisting your spine
5. **Get help if needed** - Use mechanical aids or ask for assistance

SAFE LIFTING TECHNIQUE



Ergonomic Practices

Encouraging and utilizing good ergonomics can help reduce your risk of back injuries and discomfort. Even workers in office settings are at risk.

In a Warehouse setting:

- Use adjustable equipment to reduce awkward postures
- Rotate tasks to minimize repetitive motions
- Take regular breaks to stretch and move

In an Office setting:

- Adjust your chair and desk to maintain neutral posture
- Use a footrest if needed to keep feet flat on the floor
- Position your computer monitor at eye level
- Use document holder to avoid neck strain
- Take breaks to stand, stretch and walk around.

Preventative Measures

Back, neck and spine injuries can be avoided with the right preventative measures through daily exercise and proper education.

General tips:

- Maintain a healthy weight to reduce strain on your back
- Exercise regularly to strengthen your back and core muscles
- Stay hydrated to keep discs and muscles healthy
- Wear appropriate footwear with good support

Workplace policies:

- Implement a back safety program with regular training and assessment
- Encourage employees to report hazards and near-misses
- Provide ergonomic assessments and adjustments for workstations
- Ensure proper maintenance of equipment and tools

Reporting and Responding to Back Injuries

Reporting any hazards or near-misses are crucial to any workplace. By reporting the hazards, the appropriate procedures can be taken to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Reporting Procedures:

- Report any back injury or discomfort to your supervisor immediately
- Complete an incident report form with the details of the injury

Often times, responding to a back injury in a timely manner can make all the difference.

Responding to Injuries:

- Provide first aid if necessary
- Seek medical attention for serious injuries
- Follow up with the injured employee to ensure proper recovery and return to work

Conclusion

Back safety is crucial for maintaining a healthy and productive workplace. By understanding the risks and implementing proper techniques and preventative measures, we can reduce the incidence of back injuries and create a safer environment for everyone.