

news & notes

BACKED BY STATS

Back injuries are among the most common types of injuries as well as being expensive and time-consuming:

- Nearly four out of five adults will experience a back injury at some point in their lives.
- Back injuries can cost as much as \$100,000 for a single injury.
- These injuries keep workers off the job for longer than the average work-related injury.

Furthermore, musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), a category that includes back injuries, account for more than half of American employers' spending on all work-related injuries and illnesses. Following proper safety procedures, such as safe lifting techniques, can prevent these injuries.

In addition to MSD injuries, back injuries can also be caused by a single traumatic incident like a slip and fall. To prevent this type of injury, keep work areas free of hazards, such as slick or cluttered floors.



"Yes, Daddy's home from work with a bad back. Well, have a nice day at school, Timmy!"



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We've got your back!

Take precautions to prevent back injuries

If any of these risk factors are part of your job—or your recreational activities, or your chore list at home—you could be putting yourself at risk of a back injury:

- Reaching while lifting
- Staying in one position for long periods of time or staying in a bent posture
- Repetitive lifting of awkward items, equipment, or people (as in healthcare or childcare facilities)
- Twisting while lifting
- Bending while lifting
- Heavy lifting
- Lifting with forceful movement
- Whole-body vibration, such as that experienced by lift-truck drivers and delivery drivers

To avoid injuring your back in the first place, use these back safety techniques:

- **Adjust your workstation to fit you.** If your workstation and chair are at the proper height, you are less likely to be injured.
- **Use mechanical aids,** such as pallet jacks or conveyor belts, to minimize the need to reach, lift, or move heavy items.
- **Change your position.** Don't sit or stand in one position for long periods of time.
- **Take your breaks.** They allow your muscles and tendons to rest, which is important for preventing injury.
- **Watch your posture.** Keep your back straight. When lifting, keep your back straight and lift with your legs.
- **Lighten your load.** Anytime you can break a heavy load into lighter ones, do so. Don't lift heavier loads by yourself—use a mechanical aid or team lift the item.
- **Minimize back stressors.** When you must lift something, avoid bending at the waist, twisting your back, or reaching.

It's important to catch a back injury early and treat it quickly. Know how to recognize when you've overdone it—because if you keep overdoing it, you could end up with a serious injury. If you notice any of these symptoms, see a doctor:

- Pain when attempting to assume normal posture
- Decreased mobility
- Pain when standing or rising from a seated position

The pain may feel like an ache, a sharp pain, a dull pain, or a pain that comes and goes. Your back may feel hot or inflamed, unusually tight, unusually weak or fatigued, or tingly. These can all be signs of a problem that will only get worse if it is not treated.

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TRUCK SAFETY PROGRESS

A report released by the American Trucking Association (ATA) reflects progress on a list of 20 critical steps necessary to reduce highway crashes. By the end of last year, there had been forward movement in several areas, including the safe use of technology, establishment of a national registry for certified medical examiners, and a system to prescreen potential truck drivers.

Work remains to be done in other areas, such as enactment of primary seat belt laws, programs to target aggressive driving, crash-worthiness standards for large trucks, and a clearinghouse for driver drug and alcohol test results.

The ATA says that "no meaningful progress" has been made toward a national speed limit of 65 miles per hour and speed limits for all commercial vehicles. ATA President and CEO Bill Graves expressed appreciation that state and federal partners have addressed priority items that will make commercial motor vehicles safer.



Get an extension

Use extension cords safely

Yes, it's April, but we're not talking about an extension to file your taxes!

Follow these precautions to use extension cords safely:

- **Understand potential hazards** associated with using extension cords.
- **Choose the right length and gauge** extension cord for the job by checking the cord label and the label on the electrical equipment the cord will be used with to determine wattage rating.
- **Select cords specially constructed to resist moisture, heat, or chemicals** if these conditions exist in the area where the cord will be used.
- **Inspect extension cords carefully** before each use to make sure the cord and plug are in good condition.
- **Insert the plug fully into the outlet**, and uncoil the cord to reduce the risk of overheating.
- **Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)** when using cords in wet or damp areas.
- **Make sure electrical equipment is turned off** before you plug it into an extension cord.
- **Unplug extension cords** when not in use.
- **To prevent damage to outdoor cords, store them indoors** when they are not being used.

See the light

Know the benefits of proper lighting

Light is a force that has a powerful impact on the human body. Studies have shown that dedicated applications of lighting can have an effect on all aspects of a worker's experience, including reduction in eyestrain, illness, accidents, and absenteeism.

Lighting in the average workplace ranges from 50 to 500 lux (a measurement of illumination equal to the intensity of one candle). Research has shown that proper use of lighting can lessen the loss of alertness, production errors, and accidents, especially among nightshift workers and those on rotating shifts.

Supplemental lighting with lamps, rather than more overhead lighting, can be added at workstations as needed to adequately illuminate tasks.

Remedying lighting problems can also pay off in other ways:

- Less eye fatigue means fewer visits to eye doctors, less dependency on corrective eyewear, and fewer problems with personal protective equipment related to eyes.
- Less eyestrain means fewer accidents.
- Fewer accidents mean less absenteeism.
- Better lighting increases productivity, especially in workers over the age of 40.
- Improved lighting lessens fatigue, irritability, and depression, resulting in a more pleasant workplace.