

Safety Corner

How to prevent back injuries in office?

Although back injury commonly arises from physically challenging work on construction sites and industries requiring labour-intensive activities, it is also one of the major health issues often overlooked in office environment. Back injury in the office can result from incorrect posture or overexertion of back muscle while lifting, prolonged sitting, or working in awkward position.

Since it is not possible to leave injured back tissues totally at rest unless a person is sick bed-bounded, back injury takes a long time to heal. Those having back injuries often return to work before the injuries are allowed to completely recover, and find themselves in pain with repeated injuries. Back injuries can lead to a lifetime of pain and inability to perform not only work, but recreational activities as well; thus, preventing back injury and reoccurrence have become a challenge in maintaining the well-being of staff and productivity in the office.

Risk control measures for back injury in the office involve both human factors and design aspects:

- Conduct risk assessment to identify work procedures that are susceptible to back injuries
- Perform tasks that are within one's strength capabilities
- Use proper lifting techniques that place minimum stress on the lower back and minimize torso twisting or bending while carrying a load
- Lift loads with the legs not the back and reduce the size/weight of loads
- Incorporate adequate rest in lifting schedules
- Use material handling equipment such as adjustable lift table, carts, dollies or hand trucks
- Use ergonomically designed chairs and work benches
- Avoid slouching and prolonged sitting by standing up and stretch every 20-30 minutes
- Educate staff and raise awareness of back injury
- Strengthen back muscle through physical conditioning exercises and stretching programme
- Seek medical help and rest adequately once back injury is suspected

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