



Back pain is a common Canadian health issue, with over 80% of Canadians experiencing some form of back pain sometime in their lives. Back injury is even more common in the workplace. It can strike when you least expect it: bending to lift a load, twisting the wrong way or stepping out of your truck after a long day of driving. If you have ever experienced back pain or injury, you know it can be debilitating and may even prevent you from earning a living.

People who work in the industrial sector or perform physical labour have a much higher risk for back injury on the job. People whose jobs include physical labour find that a great deal of their day-to-day tasks involve using the muscles in their back. Improper lifting or moving the wrong way can easily lead to back strain or injury. If strains and injuries are not treated, they can lead to serious pain and the inability to perform regular everyday activities.

Specific factors that can lead to back pain and injury are:

- poor posture
- overexertion
- medical factors
- slips and falls
- carrying or lifting excessive weight
- lack of exercise
- stress physical and mental

Back injury is one of the leading causes of lost time from work in Canada. Since there are many ways to injure your back at work, it's important that employees examine their specific work activities and environment to see if they are at risk for back strain or injury on the job. Stop and think how you perform your work tasks. If you find your job contains many risk factors, consider ways to reduce these risks.

"Sometimes it's a matter of modifying tasks, like changing the way you bend to lift or taking more frequent breaks from sitting," states Dr. Warren. "One of the best ways to prevent back pain and injury is to ensure your back muscles are strong. Just like professional athletes, everyone's back muscles require regular maintenance to keep them flexible and strong."

Here are some tips to keep your back healthy at work:

Lift with care Hug that load

Maintain a natural posture while you lift. You'll notice your lower back curves naturally when standing straight. Do your best to maintain this posture while lifting, lowering or moving.



Holding a load close to your belly and body reduces the strain placed on the muscles of your back and trunk. Do not lift anything that is too heavy or unwieldy!

Flex your abs Don't do the twist

Contracting your abdominal muscles, or bracing, when you lift, lowering or moving improves your spinal stability; even slight contractions can significantly reduce your chances of injury. Twisting decreases the stability of your back and increases your likelihood of injury. Pivot with your feet to turn, rather than twisting your body.

Posture and sitting

Don't:

- Slump-sit (your back should be supported)
- Lean forward and downward to reach
- Sit for long periods of time without getting up
- Sit on the floor

Do:

- Sit close to your work (or steering wheel when driving)
- Sit in a chair/seat that's low enough to place both feet on the floor
- Have a chair/seat that supports your lower back in a slightly arched position
- Use an armrest whenever possible to reduce stress to the upper body and neck
- Remove your wallet or other bulky material from your pockets

Finally, when you do experience back pain or injury consult a health professional, like a chiropractor, immediately. They can assess your injury and recommend an effective treatment plan. Remember, strong muscles and proper spinal functions are crucial to preventing injury. Chiropractic care can keep your spine and muscles in top-notch condition and functioning properly to help you avoid future strain and injury.