

Back to Work: Lifting Tips for a Safe Workplace

The office water cooler is empty again. Who will volunteer to change it? Bravely, you step forward and grab a full container, hoisting it up onto the cooler. But you begin to wonder whether your helpfulness is worth the searing pain that is now spreading across your back.

The spine is made up of many bones called vertebrae, and between each pair of vertebrae, lies a disc. The bones of the spine are attached by joints and surrounded by muscles and ligaments. All these structures work together to make us flexible while spreading out the many pressures placed on the spine during our daily activities e.g. lifting. Too much pressure on a small area of the back can result in injury. Injuries can affect the muscles, ligaments, joints, discs, and nerves of the spine. The end result is often stiffness and pain, which can be localized to the back or may even radiate down into the legs.

Practicing safe lifting techniques can go a long way in saving you from back injuries. The back is the most common area injured at work, and about two-thirds of back injuries in the workplace occur as a result of improper lifting. Incredibly, it is estimated that as many as 89 per cent of workplace lifting injuries are preventable!

Lift Light. Carry Right – Using back safe lifting techniques

- Stand close to the load to be lifted
- Place your feet shoulder-width apart
- Keep your back straight with your feet and body facing in the same direction
- Squat down to the object's level and test the weight of the load
- Use the strength of your leg and arm muscles to slowly lift the load
- Keep the load close to your body. Avoid twisting.
- Pivot with your feet to turn and face the intended direction of travel
- Bend your knees and slowly lower the load to its intended place
- Do not lift heavy objects above your waist

In Canada, almost 16 million workdays are lost due to injuries each year. That is the equivalent of one year of work for about 67,000 people! Health Canada has estimated that musculoskeletal disorders, including back pain, cost society \$16.4 billion in combined direct (treatment and rehabilitation) and indirect (lost productivity) costs. But the effects of workplace back injuries extend far beyond the plant or office.



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Doctors of Chiropractic are back care specialists, who offer drug-free, hands-on treatment that targets the source of your pain. They can also provide you with advice and exercises to stretch and strengthen muscles in order to promote efficiency and productivity.

Where workplace injuries are concerned, prevention is the key. Lift carefully and correctly, listen to your body, and let your chiropractor help get you back to work safely.

