

Back Injuries

A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

Back Injuries

Whether you're suffering from a pulled muscle, sprain, charley horse or backache, chances are you could have prevented it. More than 250,000 workers injure their muscles by using improper materials handling methods each year. It happens when climbing in and out of trucks and handling objects.

Your back is one area of the body that can never return to its former delicate structure after an injury, because repairs are rarely 100 percent effective.

Precautions should always be taken to prevent injuries and accidents, especially those that affect your back.

The most common source of muscle ache and pain is poor materials handling methods. One work injury out of four results from incorrect handling procedures or from using the wrong equipment. When you straighten up after bending over, muscles, vertebrae, ligaments and discs in your back bear more than a quarter of a ton of strain. If you use your back muscles at the same time, the weight of the object is multiplied 15 times.

Translated into lost time from work, such aches and pains cost nearly \$70million a year, most of which is spent on pain killers in a futile attempt to relieve the aching back. Because we bring most muscle aches and pains on ourselves, the best medicine is a dose of prevention.

Oil spills, clogged isles, tools lying on the floor, and the act of climbing in and out of a cab can produce falls, which often result in back injuries.

But since the bulk of back injuries results from poor materials handling techniques, these techniques and suggestions may help prevent such injuries:

- Face the load and avoid twisting your body.
- Determine the center of gravity in order to keep the load balanced.
- Watch out for nails or other protrusions that could cause cuts or other types of injuries.
- Keep the load close to your body and carry it at knuckle height.
- Don't jerk the load.
- Make sure the path you're taking is free of obstructions or slipping hazards.

- Know your limits and get help with heavy or awkward loads.
- When you set the load down, watch for pinch points.

These reminders may help you on the job:

- Gear your activity to your age and physical condition. Physical exertion is an excellent body builder, but it should not be performed in excess. Stop and rest when you feel tired.
- When entering or leaving a truck cab, use the handgrip's and make sure the step-ups are dry and clear.
- If you have a job that allows little movement, it is important to watch your posture and change your working position as often as you can. Don't become tense--rest the muscles that are constantly in use.

Take time each day to remind yourself of what you are doing. In short, use your head to save your back.