



Greater Houston
Chapter

Toolbox Talk

Back Safety

Company Name _____

Speaker Name/Job Title _____ Date _____

Have you ever given much thought to your back? It's there when you need it, but only if you don't abuse it.

Anatomy of the Human Back

- The back is made up of four major parts; the spine, nerves, muscles, and the spinal cord.
- There are thirty-three bones in the spine and thirty-one pairs of nerves branching out from the spinal cord. All of them must work together. If they don't, you could end up with anything from a strain to a ruptured disk, fractured vertebrae, and/or a debilitating disease like arthritis.

How to Maintain a Healthy Back

- To help prevent a back injury you should exercise, practice good posture, eat the right foods, and watch your weight.
- Check with your doctor for muscle strengthening exercises for the back.
- Other things you can do to prevent back injuries include using work-saving devices -- hand trucks, forklifts, wheelbarrows, and dollies can assist you.
- When you have an object to lift that is too heavy or bulky, get help. Ask a co-worker for their assistance. Remember, two backs are stronger than one.

Proper Lifting Techniques

- **Plan ahead before lifting.**
 - Knowing what you're doing and where you're going will prevent you from making awkward movements while holding something heavy. Clear a path, and if lifting something with another person, make sure both of you agree on the plan.
- **Lift close to your body.**
 - You will be a stronger and more stable lifter if the object is held close to your body rather than at the end of your reach. Make sure you have a firm hold on the object you are lifting, and keep it balanced close to your body.
- **Feet shoulder width apart.**
 - A solid base of support is important while lifting. Holding your feet too close together will be unstable, too far apart will hinder movement. Keep the feet about shoulder width apart and take short steps.
- **Bend your knees and keep your back straight.**
 - Practice the lifting motion before you lift the object, and think about your motion before you lift. Focus on keeping your spine straight--raise and lower to the ground by bending your knees.
- **Tighten your stomach muscles.**
 - Tightening your abdominal muscles will hold your back in a good lifting position and will help prevent excessive force on the spine.
- **Lift with your legs.**
 - Your legs are many times stronger than your back muscles--let your strength work in your favor. Again, lower to the ground by bending your knees, not your back. Keeping your eyes focused upwards helps to keep your back straight.

- **If you're straining, get help.**
 - If an object is too heavy, or awkward in shape, make sure you have someone around who can help you lift.
- **Wear a belt or back support.**
 - If you are lifting in your job or often at home a, back belt can help you maintain a better lifting posture.
- **Never bend your back to pick something up.**
 - It's just not worth the damage that improper lifting technique can cause.
- **Don't twist or bend.**
 - Face in the direction you are walking. If you need to turn, stop, turn in small steps, and then continue walking.
- **Keep your eyes up.**
 - Looking slightly upwards will help you maintain a better position of the spine

**AVOID THE MISERY OF A SORE BACK THINK BEFORE YOU LIFT - THEN
DO IT CORRECTLY!!!**

Further Safety Recommendations by Meeting Attendees

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Meeting Attended By:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____