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Protect Your Back with Proper Body Mechanics

Body mechanics refer to the way you move your body - and your back - during everyday tasks. Improper body mechanics often lead to injuries on the job and pose a significant safety concern for companies. Workers in many different industries and occupations can be exposed to risk factors at work that can cause Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) that negatively affect the muscles, nerves, blood vessels, ligaments and tendons.

Risk factors for workers can include lifting heavy objects, bending, reaching overhead, twisting, pushing and pulling, and performing repetitive tasks. The use of proper body mechanics can help reduce the risk of injury. **Try following these tips to protect your back:**



LIFTING

- Position yourself closely to the object and stand with your feet shoulder-distance apart.
- Bend at your knees - do not bend at the waist.
- Test the weight of the object before lifting. If it is too heavy, get help.
- Use 2 hands when lifting and keep the object close to your body
- Do NOT twist. Your back should be straight.

REACHING

- Reach only as far as it is comfortable. Do not stretch beyond your comfort level.
- Test the weight of the object before lighting it off shelf by pushing up on one corner.
- Only light, rarely used items should be stored overhead.

PUSHING/PULLING

- Push rather than pull when you have a choice. It is less strain.
- For pushing, place one leg behind the other, bend knees and hips, and incline body toward the object.
- When pulling, place one foot behind the other. Only pull for short distances.

CARRYING

- Hold objects with 2 hands at waist level if possible.
- Keep object close to your body.

Reference Source: OSHA.gov

Don't Be a Weekend Yardwork Warrior

Cleaning up autumn's fall leaves before the long, cold winter months can mean hours spent outside doing yardwork. Even for fairly active folks, the physical demands of raking and bagging leaves, tearing out the garden, and performing other yardwork can be very different than what their bodies are used to doing.

To avoid "Weekend Warrior" syndrome and the injuries that can result from excessive amounts of activity over the span of a few days, be sure to take these important steps:



Warm Up

Make sure you're limber before tackling the yard. This will go a long way to combat soreness and prevent muscle strains. Take a short 5-10 minute walk to warm your muscles and do some gentle stretches. Repeat the stretches throughout your time working.

Use Proper Body Mechanics

Be aware of body position when raking, bending or picking up debris in the yard. Always bend from the knees and keep your back straight. Use a cart or wheelbarrow to move items from one place in the yard to another. When raking, place one foot in front of the other and then switch after 10 minutes.

Take Breaks and Change Tasks

Take frequent rest and stretch breaks, drink plenty of water and wear proper clothing for sun protection and to allow for sweating. Get the whole family involved in your chores to reduce the workload.

Change positions often to avoid repetitive motions. If you are pulling weeds, stand up after 10 minutes to stretch and change position. Rake a small part of the yard, then pick up the debris and move it out of the area. Break up sitting tasks by walking whenever possible.

Increase Your Activity throughout the Week

Be sure to stay active throughout the week by walking, stretching and strength training. Being more consistent with your activity will make injuries less likely to happen on the weekends.

Three Tips for Backpack Safety

1. Wear both straps

Use of one strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By wearing two shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is better distributed.



2. Wear the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles

Pay close attention to the way the backpack is positioned on the back. It should rest evenly in the middle of the back. Shoulder straps should be adjusted to allow the child to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty and allow free movement of the arms. Straps should not be too loose, and the backpack should not extend below the low back.

3. Lighten the load

Keep the load at 10-15% or less of the child's bodyweight. Carry only those items that are required for the day. Organize the contents of the backpack by placing the heaviest items closest to the back. Some students have two sets of books so as not to have to carry the heavy books to and from school.