

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Prevention of Low Back Pain



Low back pain is a common occupational health problem. The National Safety Council's 1991 Accident Facts reports that back injuries are the most frequent of all disabling work injuries in the United States. Statistics show that about 31% of all worker compensation cases are related to back injuries. For obvious reasons, farmers are especially vulnerable to developing back injury problems because of the nature of their work.

RISK FACTORS:

- Lifting objects heavier than 25 lbs. or repeatedly lifting lighter objects
- Awkward body posture while working
- Extending driving of vehicles such as tractors, trucks and other farm equipment that can cause whole body vibration
- Slips and falls and other trauma producing injuries associated with adverse working conditions

Men and women between the ages of 20 and 40 are prone to work-related back pain. Activities that put excessive stress on the spine seem to play a part in developing the lower back pain.

Manual lifting of heavy objects is the most common cited risk factor causing this back pain. In agriculture, we lift heavy objects like sacks of agronomy seeds, bales of hay, sacks of feed and in some cases even animals. Repetitive lifting and machinery vibrations are both associated with lower back pain.

Most low-back pain associated with overexertion is short-lived. One-half of the individuals who seek medical attention will improve in the first week and over 90% improve in the first two months, regardless of the treatment. Because people may experience multiple episodes of back pain that may be incapacitating (a person suffering an incident of low back pain has only about a 2% to 4% chance of it being a permanent disability).

Low back pain remains a significant cause of missed work days and worker discomfort. Most sufferers of lower back pain disorders respond to medical management prescribed by their doctors. Therapy usually includes bed rest, controlled physical activity, physical therapy, and medication. For those who have received controlled medical therapy, follow-up evaluation is very important.

TIPS FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF LOWER BACK INCIDENTS:

We know that lower back pain comes as a result of strained ligaments, tendons or muscles in the lower back. More often than not, it is the result of over lifting, extreme body movements, all of which the body hasn't been conditioned to.

Following are some tips that, if we practice them, we can reduce our chances of injuring our backs:

- Check the weight of the load. Don't overload yourself.
- Don't lift solely with your back. Position yourself where you can use your legs to assist to help balance the load. The legs are one of the strongest muscles in the body and can make the job much easier by utilizing them. Do not bend over to lift, but position the legs close to the load, bending the legs and knees with the back straight. In this way, your legs are doing most of the work, thus giving your back some added protection.
- Push the load instead of pulling; it is less stressful on your body.
- Avoid twisting when lifting. Twisting is the #1 cause of slipped discs.
- Exercise – Sedentary lifestyle is a large contribution to lower back problems. Regular exercise is a major benefit for your back.
- Weight maintenance – Losing weight or controlling your weight is one great benefit for a healthy back. Obesity is often the cause behind back pain. You can do aerobic exercises, walking, jogging, swimming, riding a bicycle or other physical activities for good back maintenance. Any physical activity is better than sitting in front of the TV.
- Eat Healthy – A healthy diet combined with a regulatory program of exercise not only is good for lower back pain maintenance, but is also good for your overall health.
- If you are in a sitting position for long periods of time, get up every five minutes and walk around a little. The same is true if you are in a vehicle for extended time periods. Stop every two hours or so and move around.

KNOW SAFETY – NO INJURY

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NO SAFETY – KNOW INJURY