

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Back Safety



Back safety and generally protecting your back is a subject that is never discussed enough. All of our body parts are important in our overall functioning, and we need to protect all of these to maintain the quality of life that we are accustomed to enjoying.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year and that back injuries account for one out of every five workplace injuries.

Our backs are like farm machinery or our personal vehicles. They are only as good as the care and maintenance that we practice to keep them in dependable working order. If you have experienced a back injury you know how you can suffer until you can recover. A faulty or injured back affects your limbs, hips, neck and your head. Many back injuries are so debilitating that it affects many facets of your everyday lifestyle. These include lost work days and bad quality time at home because you don't feel like visiting or even communicating because of the pain.

Following are some tips that, if used or practiced, will help to keep your back in good condition:

- Don't bend over an object you are lifting. Bend your knees, squatting in front of the object to reach it.
- Lift the object carefully and slowly, using your leg and arm muscles to lift, not pulling with your back.
- Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.
- While lifting, keep the object as close to your body as possible.
- Keep your abdominal muscles tight while making the lift.

- Use the same techniques when you are putting the object down.
- If the object is too big or heavy to lift using these techniques, then you should get mechanical assistance or call for help from someone to assist you in the lift.
- Don't twist at the waist while carrying or holding a heavy load.
- Grip the load with the palms of your hands and fingers. Gripping with the palm is more secure. Tuck in your chin to make sure that your back is straight before starting to lift.
- Keep your arms and elbows close to the body while lifting.
- Look the area over where your load is going to make sure that there are no obstacles in your walkway.

When reaching for objects:

- Do not reach for an object unless you're sure that you're strong enough to lift it.
- Use a step ladder to reach objects above shoulder height.
- Avoid awkward stretches while reaching. These stress your back and could cause you to lose your balance.
- Don't depend on structures to support you, such as storage racks, boxes or shelving. Two things could happen and both are bad: The support could give way or you could slip from the support.

A short word about back belts. There is a lot of controversy going around about the effectiveness of back belts. The National Safety Council published a report on these, stating that they neither endorse nor condemn them. Sometimes these tend to offer a false sense of security, as the user may try to lift more than he can safely handle.

Your back does the work - -not the belt!

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