

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Safety Tips:
Prevent Back Injuries*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2008 Health Report states that over 27% of the USA population age 18 and over have active back pain. As many as 80-90% of Americans will experience an episode of back pain at some point during their lifetime. The American Chiropractic Association reports that, at any given time in the USA, 31 million people are experiencing low-back pain.

According to the Global Burden of Disease, low-back pain is the single leading cause of disability worldwide.

CAUSES OF BACK PAIN-

There are several reasons or causes of back pain including the following:

- ✓ Stretched or strained muscles
- ✓ Torn or stretched ligaments
- ✓ Ruptured discs
- ✓ Osteoarthritis
- ✓ Emotional or tension stress

The Farm Medicine Center states that farmers appear to be at an increased risk for back pain. The reason being that they are involved in a variety of work actions that puts a strain on their back.

TIPS TO PREVENT BACK PAIN-

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Our back is critically important to our ability to walk, stand, sit, and run. Most back pain comes from improper use, so if we learn to use the following tips, it will lessen the potential for an injury:

- **Lose excess weight** – Excess weight can exert extra force on your back and stomach. Your back tries to support the weight out front by swaying backwards, causing excess strain on the lower back muscles. By losing weight you will reduce the strain and pain on your back.
- **Maintain good posture** – You can prevent many back pains by learning to sit, stand, and lift items correctly. When you sit down, don't slouch. Slouching puts a strain on the back ligaments putting pressure on the back vertebrae. The ideal posture is to sit straight in your chair with your back touching the chair back and your feet flat on the floor with your knees slightly higher than your hips.
- **Maintain good posture while you sleep and drive** – Sleep on a hard mattress or put a sheet of plywood between the mattress and box springs. A soft mattress and box springs tends to inhibit back sprain and a sway back. Sleep with your knees slightly bent or on your back with a pillow under your knees for support. Also, drive with your back straight against the seat and close enough to the wheel so your knees are bent and slightly higher than your hips.

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Excerpts: www.nasonline.org
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Plan your lift – Lifting objects is in a way a mindless game. We see a load to move or relocate and human nature sneaks in and we try to move it incorrectly without forethought of the consequences. Lifting incorrectly results in unnecessary back strain and to the surrounding muscles. The best way or only way to lift properly is to survey the load weight and the distance to move it. You don't need to be a hero or impress your peers; ask for help and/or seek a mechanical device, such as a forklift, pallet jack, or two-wheeler, whichever is applicable.

Position yourself correctly in front of the load – Assuming that you have planned the lift, the next step is getting in position to lift.

- Align your body in front of the load.
- Your feet should be straddling the load (width of your shoulders or the load, which one is most applicable).
- Squat down bending your knees, not your back and stomach.
- Using both hands grab the load, bring it as close to your body as possible.
- This will help distribute the weight of the load over your feet, making the move easier.

Lift with your legs, not your back –

- The load being close to your body, slowly straighten until you're standing straight.
- Make sure the load isn't blocking your vision and start your walk to your destination.
- If you need to make a turn, do so by turning your feet and not twisting your abdomen.

Set the load down correctly –

- Once you reach your destination, it is important to unload it correctly.
- Reverse the instructions above for unloading. If you do this you will reduce the strain on your back and abdominal muscles.
- Set the load down, squat down by bending your knees, positioning the load in front of you.
- As mentioned lightly above, if the load is too bulky, heavy, or awkward, ask for help from a fellow worker, split the load in two trips, or get a device to help (a forklift, a pallet jack, cart or two-wheeler).

Get help, if needed –

- Remember, as we mentioned above, if the load is too heavy or cumbersome, ask for help.
- Call on a fellow employee, possibly breaking the load down into two trips or seek a mechanical device.
- Over extending yourself, potentially causing a back strain, should not be one of your options.

***PRACTICE SAFETY IN ALL THAT
YOU DO
EVERYONE DEPENDS ON YOU
THINK SAFETY
ACT SAFELY***