Safety Matters

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News & Notes

BACK PAIN: WHAT CAUSES IT AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

Back pain is among mankind's earliest and most enduring afflictions. In fact, cave drawings have depicted early sufferers.

The American Physical Therapy Association estimates that today more than 80 percent of workers suffer back pain at some time during their careers and that back pain is the most common cause of loss of activity among adults under 45.

Everyone is vulnerable to back injury, but people in jobs that involve a lot of exertion, such as bending and lifting, are particularly at risk. Off the job, back injury can result from numerous everyday activities, such as housework, gardening, athletics, and even sitting for long periods. Expectant mothers find their backs stressed in new ways, as do parents lifting babies and toddlers.

While most back injuries heal eventually, it's best to take steps to prevent injury and pain. For example:

- Use safe lifting techniques.
- Maintain proper posture, without slouching or rounding the shoulders. Proper sleeping posture is also important: Use a firm but not hard mattress, and lie on your side or back, not your stomach.
- Keep your weight down. Extra pounds put added stress on your lower back, especially if you have a "pot belly."
- Exercise regularly to strengthen and tone back and stomach muscles by doing crunches, using exercise machines, and walking, cycling, or swimming.

Correct body alignment during lifting

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

A house with two occupants
an hourglass shape
break the walls
eat the tenants
then throw it away... what am I?

Answers on page 2 Safety Bits and Pieces

Back to Basics

Three steps to safe lifting and carrying

Here are some back injury facts:

- Nearly 1,000 American workers injure their backs on the job every day—and many more get hurt off the job.
- The majority of injuries involve improper lifting, carrying, or unloading.
- The chances of injuring your back increase if you're out of shape and have weak abdominal muscles.
- Once you've hurt your back, you're much more likely to injure it again.

You can avoid back injury by following these basic steps:

STEP I — To safely lift an object:

1. **Plan your lift.** Check to make sure you can handle the weight. If not, divide the load into smaller, lighter parts, ask for help, or use a material handling device, such as a handtruck or dolly. Check your route, too, to make sure there are no obstructions in your path. Know where you are going to place your load.
2. **Stand close to the load** with your feet spread shoulder width apart, with one foot slightly in front of the other for balance.
3. **Squat down,** bending at the knees—not at your waist. Tuck your chin while keeping your back as straight as possible.
4. **Get a firm grasp** of the object before beginning to lift.
5. **Slowly begin lifting with your legs** by straightening them. Let your leg muscles—not your back muscles—do the work. Never twist your body.

STEP II — To safely carry an object:

1. **Keep the object as close to your body as possible.** As the load's center of gravity moves away from your body, there's a dramatic increase in stress to your lower back.
2. **Make sure you can see** over the load.
3. **Move slowly,** taking small steps.
4. **To turn, move your feet** in the direction of travel, don't twist your body.

STEP III — To safely unload an object:

1. **Bend your knees** and lower your body with the load.
2. **Keep your back straight** and let your leg muscles bear the weight.
3. **Keep your fingers away from the bottom** of the load as you place it down.
4. **If you're placing a load on an elevated surface, lower it to the edge,** then slide it back.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

These steps can help for most cases of sunburn:
(1) Take cool baths or gently apply cool, wet cloths to the burned area. (2) Apply moisturizing cream, aloe or hydrocortisone cream to the burned areas. (3) Lightly bandage blisters with gauze to prevent infection. Don't break blisters because this slows healing and increases the risk of infection. When blisters break and skin peals, remove dried fragments and apply antiseptic ointment or hydrocortisone cream. (4) Drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids. (5) Avoid exposure to the sun until healed.

Safety Bits & Pieces

NEW EQUIPMENT CAN MEAN NEW HAZARDS

Although new equipment is often safer because it has new or enhanced safeguards, there will almost certainly still be hazards. And those hazards may be different from the ones you were used to with the old equipment. New risks might involve:

- Electrical shock
- Burns
- Eye injuries
- Cuts
- Amputations
- Fire
- Noise

With hazardous substances, you have to be concerned about risks such as:

- Acute and chronic health effects
- Safety hazards such as fire, explosion, or chemical reactions
- Chemical burns
- Sensitivity to irritants
- Consequences of spills and other unexpected releases

New procedures might expose you to new hazards or expose you to the same hazards in different ways. For example:

- If a new procedure involves different materials, substances, or equipment, you could be exposed to new hazards.
- If a new procedure involves new or different steps, the consequences of forgetting steps or performing steps in the wrong order could lead to unanticipated results, including accidents and injuries.

When anything is new in your job, make sure you understand potential new hazards as well as new or different precautions required to keep safe.

YOUR ROLE IN INVESTIGATIONS

When accidents happen, we need to find out what happened, why, and how to prevent it from happening again. That's where you come in:

- Report accidents and near-misses even if no one is hurt.
- Understand that the purpose of accident investigations is to find hazards and correct them, not to place blame.
- If you witness an accident or are involved in one, come forward right away and tell what you know.
- If you have special knowledge or experience about procedures, equipment, or other factors involved in an accident, speak to investigators and share your expertise and recommendations.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH ANSWER:
A peanut

Prevent Hand Tool Injuries

Use this checklist to keep safe

Everyone knows power tools can cause serious injuries. But so can hand tools. Cuts, punctures, eye injuries, and broken bones can result from careless use of hand tools. This checklist can help you keep safe when working with hand tools.

- ✓ Select the right tool—and the right size tool—for the job.
- ✓ Keep tools clean and in good condition.
- ✓ Repair or turn in damaged or unsafe tools, e.g., those with broken handles, loose hammer heads, dull or worn blades or drill bits.
- ✓ Transport tools in a toolbox or tool belt.
- ✓ Give tools to another person handle first; don't toss them.
- ✓ Carry pointed or sharp tools with the dangerous edge away from your body.
- ✓ Use a bag or bucket to carry or hoist tools up and down ladders.
- ✓ When using cutting tools, cut away from your body.
- ✓ Wear safety shoes and safety glasses when working with tools.
- ✓ Make sure the tool handle fits your hand comfortably so you get a good grip.
- ✓ Use a vise to secure materials being cut, filed, drilled, screwed, etc.
- ✓ Keep track of your tools, and don't leave them lying around where someone could trip over them.
- ✓ Be careful when working above ground level so tools don't fall on someone below.
- ✓ Store tools in the proper place when not in use.

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

"I can be forced to live without happiness, but I will never consent to live without honor."

Pierre Corneille (1606-1684; French playwright)

SAFETY TIDBIT

According to the Injury Fact Book, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death for persons ages 5 - 44, in the United States.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

A duck walked into a general store, waddled up to the counter and asked: "Got any peanuts?" "No," said the assistant. The next day the duck returned. "Got any peanuts?" "No," said the assistant. The following day the duck came in again. "Got any peanuts?" "No," yelled the assistant. "I've told you we don't have any peanuts. If you come in here again and ask for peanuts, I'll nail your webbed feet to the floor. "

The next day the duck was back. "Got any nails?" "No," said the assistant. "Good. Got any peanuts?"

No Fooling

Fooling around creates unnecessary risks

Workplace safety is serious business. Fooling around takes away your margin of safety. So when you're at work:

- ⇨ Don't run.
- ⇨ Don't throw tools, materials, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), beverage cans, balls, or anything else.
- ⇨ Don't play with sharp-edged tools.
- ⇨ Don't speed or show off while driving a forklift.
- ⇨ Don't stunt ride on a forklift or conveyor.
- ⇨ Don't distract someone who's working with machinery or hazardous materials.
- ⇨ Don't play practical jokes.
- ⇨ Don't roughhouse or shove a co-worker.
- ⇨ Don't use any piece of equipment for anything but its intended purpose.
- ⇨ Don't let co-workers fool around—bystanders are often the ones who get hurt.
- ⇨ Don't accuse co-workers who take safety seriously of having "no sense of humor."