

HOW TO HAVE STRONG POSTURE

Employees who demonstrate strong posture while handling materials can prevent overexertion, the No. 1 cause of workplace injuries every year.



BEND AT THE KNEES

By bending at the knees and hips you can keep that straight line from your ears to your shoulders to your hips. This keeps your back in its safe, strong position.

TIGHTEN YOUR CORE

Tighten your core and keep your ears, shoulders and hips aligned. Use the muscles in legs and arms, not your back.

KEEP IT CLOSE

To avoid reaching, position yourself so that the objects are in front of and close to you. Pivot your feet so that you are facing the object with your toes pointed toward it.

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HOW TO AVOID INJURIES ASSOCIATED WITH MANUAL MATERIALS HANDLING

Purpose: To increase awareness of injuries due to manual materials handling and discuss how to prevent injuries by implementing controls in the workplace.
Instructions: Read aloud the following sections of this toolbox talk. While reading this toolbox talk, the front side of the poster should be shown to colleagues.
Duration: 7-12 minutes

DEFINE MANUAL MATERIALS HANDLING

(1-2 MINUTES)

Manual materials handling describes tasks that require physical effort in order to grasp, hold, lift, lower, push, pull, drag, carry or otherwise move things. Overexertion during manual materials handling is the No. 1 cause of workplace injuries every year. These injuries affect the soft tissues of the body, resulting in swelling, strained muscles, pinched nerves, ligament sprains or disc problems in the neck and back. The best way to avoid these injuries is by not having to lift, push, pull or carry things at work. Sometimes the demands cannot be eliminated, but there are ways to make the tasks easier, such as:

- Using a powered lift gate to raise and lower items into or out of trucks.
- Transporting items with a wheeled cart instead of lifting and carrying them.
- Using a powered cart, which could eliminate any pushing/pulling demands to move the cart.
- Storing items off the floor so they can be slid on/off carts instead of being lifted.
- Using a ratcheting tool to tighten or secure tie-downs.

What's more, a company might choose to start purchasing materials in bulk rather than in pallets of 50-pound sacks. This adjustment means the materials would be moved by equipment instead of having employees break down the pallets and handle those materials.

DISCUSSION

(3-5 MINUTES)

Ask the following questions to the large group. Allow 3-5 minutes for discussion.

- What materials do you have to lift, move or handle as part of your job?
- What materials are the most challenging to move?
- What makes it challenging to move the materials – is it the weight, size, shape or the grip that presents an issue?

TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

(2-3 MINUTES)

Demonstrate for participants how to put your body in a strong position. An activity will follow during which participants will complete these steps.

You should put your body in a strong position anytime you have to handle materials. Consider the following tips:

- Start by raising your chin and rolling your shoulders back and down so that your elbows are by your sides.
- Imagine looking at yourself from the side in this position. You should be able to draw a straight line that connects your ears, shoulders and hips, which will keep your back in a strong, safe position. Try to keep yourself in that position anytime you have to handle materials.
- Make adjustments to the workspace in order to place the materials at your waist level.
- Position yourself so that the materials are in front of and close to you.
- To avoid reaching, pivot your feet so that you are facing the materials with your toes pointed toward them.
- Bend at your knees and hips to move materials so that you keep the straight line from your ears to your shoulders to your hips.

Each of these tips will keep your back in a safe and strong position.

ACTIVITY

(1-2 MINUTES)

In this activity, you are going to use your core muscles to help create a strong posture and protect your back.

1. Look straight ahead with your chin up and then roll your shoulders back and bring your elbows by your sides.
2. Put one hand on your stomach, take a breath in and then exhale forcefully, doing so as if you're blowing out a candle.
3. Do this two or three times, and pay attention to how the muscles under your hand tense up every time you exhale.
4. Now try to tighten those muscles without exhaling.

Remember this activity every time you have to lift, lower, push, pull or carry things. Put on that muscle "brace" before you start handling materials and hold that tension until you're finished.

Reference: McGill, Stuart. (2002). *Low Back Disorders: Evidence-Based Prevention and Rehabilitation*. Human Kinetics.

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