

# BACK PAIN AND BACK INJURIES

Low back pain is the leading cause of lost work days and activity limitation (WHO), and is responsible for about 40% of missed work days. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons found that in 2004, 25.9 million persons lost an average of 7.2 days of work due to back pain. Primary care studies in chronic low back pain patients have found that average loss to be as high as 12 missed work days.

FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH:  
ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF ADULTS EXPERIENCE LOW BACK  
PAIN AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIFETIMES.

IT IS THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF JOB-RELATED  
DISABILITY AND A LEADING CONTRIBUTOR TO MISSED  
WORK DAYS.

IN A LARGE SURVEY, MORE THAN A QUARTER OF ADULTS  
REPORTED EXPERIENCING LOW BACK PAIN DURING THE  
PAST 3 MONTHS.

MOST LOW BACK PAIN IS ACUTE, OR SHORT TERM, AND LASTS A FEW DAYS TO A FEW WEEKS. IT TENDS TO RESOLVE ON ITS OWN WITH SELF-CARE AND THERE IS NO RESIDUAL LOSS OF FUNCTION.

**i.e. can be treated at home with rest, ice, heat, over the counter anti-inflammatories and gentle stretching.**


*CHRONIC BACK PAIN* IS DEFINED AS PAIN THAT PERSISTS FOR 12 WEEKS OR LONGER, EVEN AFTER AN INITIAL INJURY OR UNDERLYING CAUSE OF ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN HAS BEEN TREATED.

20 PERCENT OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN DEVELOP CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN WITH PERSISTENT SYMPTOMS AT ONE YEAR. IN SOME CASES, TREATMENT SUCCESSFULLY RELIEVES CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN, BUT IN OTHER CASES PAIN PERSISTS DESPITE MEDICAL AND SURGICAL TREATMENT.

(AND THAT CAUSES TROUBLE ON THE JOB!!!)

ERGONOMICS CAN PREVENT THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF BACK PAIN AND  
OTHER REPETITIVE INJURIES.

ONCE PROBLEMS ARE IDENTIFIED,  
ERGONOMIC RECOMMENDATIONS  
CAN BE MADE TO HELP SOME PEOPLE  
RETURN TO WORK

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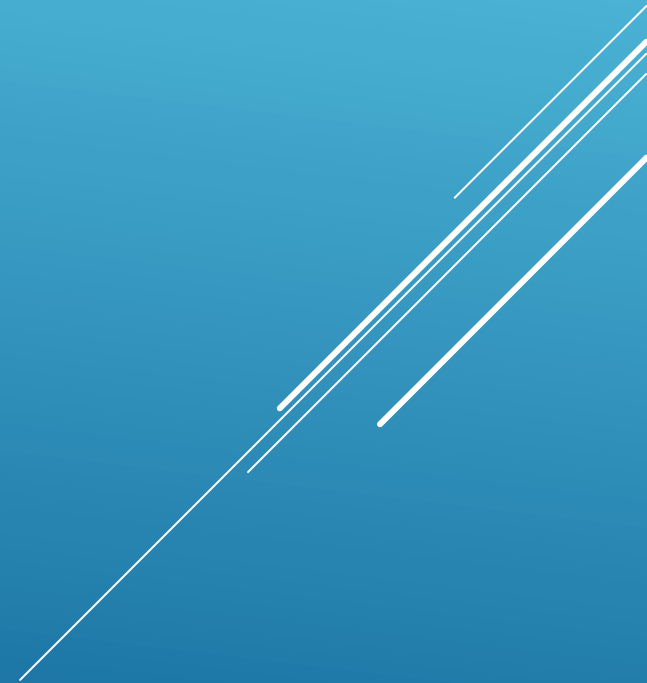
‘ERGONOMICS: AN APPLIED SCIENCE  
CONCERNED WITH DESIGNING AND ARRANGING  
THINGS PEOPLE USE SO PEOPLE AND THINGS  
INTERACT MOST EFFICIENTLY AND SAFELY

— CALLED ALSO BIOTECHNOLOGY, HUMAN  
ENGINEERING, HUMAN FACTORS ‘

-MERRIAM WEBSTER DICTIONARY

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ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENTS  
CAN BE MADE BY  
INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERS,  
AND  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS



**YOU** CAN TAKE STEPS TO AVOID AND PREVENT  
BACK PAIN AND INJURIES AT WORK.

FOR EXAMPLE:

**PAY ATTENTION TO POSTURE.** WHEN STANDING,  
BALANCE YOUR WEIGHT EVENLY ON YOUR FEET.  
BACK.



ADJUST THE HEIGHT OF YOUR CHAIR SO THAT  
YOUR FEET REST FLAT ON THE FLOOR OR ON A  
FOOTREST AND YOUR THIGHS ARE PARALLEL TO  
THE FLOOR

Remove your wallet or cellphone from your  
back pocket when sitting to prevent putting  
extra pressure on your buttocks or lower back.

**LIFT PROPERLY.** WHEN LIFTING AND CARRYING A HEAVY OBJECT, LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS AND TIGHTEN YOUR CORE MUSCLES. HOLD THE OBJECT CLOSE TO YOUR BODY. MAINTAIN THE NATURAL CURVE OF YOUR BACK.

DON'T TWIST WHEN LIFTING.

IF AN OBJECT IS TOO HEAVY TO LIFT SAFELY, ASK SOMEONE TO HELP YOU.

## **MODIFY REPETITIVE TASKS**

USE LIFTING DEVICES, WHEN AVAILABLE, TO HELP YOU LIFT LOADS.

TRY TO ALTERNATE PHYSICALLY DEMANDING TASKS WITH LESS DEMANDING ONES.

IF YOU WORK AT A COMPUTER, MAKE SURE THAT YOUR MONITOR, KEYBOARD, MOUSE AND CHAIR ARE POSITIONED PROPERLY.

IF YOU FREQUENTLY TALK ON THE PHONE AND TYPE OR WRITE AT THE SAME TIME, PLACE YOUR PHONE ON SPEAKER OR USE A HEADSET.

AVOID UNNECESSARY BENDING, TWISTING AND REACHING.

LIMIT THE TIME YOU SPEND CARRYING HEAVY BRIEFCASES, PURSES AND BAGS. CONSIDER USING A ROLLING SUITCASE.

## **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY.**

IF YOU MUST SIT FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD,  
CHANGE YOUR POSITION OFTEN. PERIODICALLY  
WALK AROUND AND GENTLY STRETCH YOUR  
MUSCLES TO RELIEVE TENSION.

Three parallel white lines of varying lengths are positioned diagonally in the bottom right corner of the image, pointing towards the top right.

# WHAT CAN BE DONE TO KEEP WORKERS ON THE JOB?

- + Acknowledge some jobs are going to make back pain worse – sitting, standing, lifting, climbing, crouching, reaching.....
- +Assuring the most appropriate ergonomic positions and supports are available can help.
- +Allow for accommodations, such as more frequent breaks, stretching sessions for all employees, frequent position changes, sit/stand options for office workers, reduce manual lifting and carrying,
- +Have a formal ergonomic assessment with recommendations
- +Consider a different job assignment
- +If necessary, provide additional training to move the worker to a job with less physical demand

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

## **PREVENTING BACK PAIN AT WORK AND AT HOME AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS**

[HTTP://ORTHOINFO.AAOS.ORG/TOPIC.CFM?TOPIC=A00261.](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00261)

## **UNDERSTANDING OFFICE ERGONOMICS AND ARRANGING YOUR WORKSPACE ACCORDINGLY CAN HELP YOU FEEL GOOD THROUGHOUT THE WORKDAY**

[HTTPS://WWW.MAYOCLINIC.ORG/HEALTHY-LIFESTYLE/ADULT-HEALTH/IN-DEPTH/BACK-PAIN/ART-20044526?P=1](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/back-pain/art-20044526?P=1)

## **ERGONOMIC GUIDELINES FOR MANUAL MATERIAL HANDLING**

[HTTPS://WWW.CDC.GOV/NIOSH/DOCS/2007-131/PDFS/2007-131.PDF](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2007-131/pdfs/2007-131.pdf)

DESCRIBES HOW TO MAKE JOBS MORE ERGONOMICALLY SAFE, PREVENTING INJURIES FROM HAPPENING.

## **THE AMERICAN CHRONIC PAIN ASSOCIATION (ACPA)**

[HTTPS://WWW.ACPANOW.ORG/](https://www.acpanow.org/)

## **THE ACPA AND STANFORD RESOURCE GUIDE TO CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT (\*\*CAUTION 213 PAGES MAY BE MORE THAN YOU WISH TO PRINT!)**

[HTTPS://WWW.ACPANOW.COM/ACPA-STANFORD-GUIDE.HTML](https://www.acpanow.com/acpa-stanford-guide.html)

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM ACPA**

[HTTPS://WWW.ACPANOW.COM/PDF-RESOURCES.HTML](https://www.acpanow.com/pdf-resources.html)





# 10 WAYS BACK PAIN IN THE WORKPLACE IMPACTS EMPLOYEES

[HTTPS://WWW.FERNHEALTH.COM/BLOG/BACK-PAIN-  
IN-THE-WORKPLACE-IMPACTS-EMPLOYEES/](https://www.fernhealth.com/blog/back-pain-in-the-workplace-impacts-employees/)

\*\*COPY AND PASTE THE URL

# EMPLOYERS MAY GET HELP FROM

**Michigan Rehabilitation Services Business Network Unit**

**[www.Michigan.gov/mrs](http://www.Michigan.gov/mrs)**

**Click on 'Opportunities for Business'**

Their trained staff can help with ergonomic assessments, suggest assistive technology and advise on the prevention of repetitive injuries.