



Back Pain

A 2005 report in The Journal of the American Medical Association estimated Americans spend \$86 billion a year on treating neck and back pain, probably more than any other ailment. Back pain is often first noticed as ache, soreness, tension and tightness. When a spasm occurs, it can range from moderate to overwhelming pain. Untreated or mistreated, the problem can worsen or persist for months or even years and become what is known as “chronic.”

What does this mean for you and your organization? Manual Material Handling, (MMH) jobs are a major source of employees’ back pains and injuries. It is the most costly musculoskeletal problem in the United States and second only to the common cold as the reason for physician visits. Back pain is the third most common reason for surgery, and remains a major cause of work disability, with enormous associated costs to employers, insurers and families.

The good news is progress is being made to transform our unnecessary and often costly dependence on healthcare providers and turn toward self-management options that are not only a good but often the best. Ergonomics plays a vital role in reducing the incidence of back pain through task redesign and employee education and training. There are ways to eliminate the risk factors found in MMH tasks but the employees need to be aware and take responsibility for the changes in behaviors while the companies are responsible for changing the jobs. Job changes can amount to better gloves for better grip using less force. Changes can be to better seating systems in trucks, buses and vehicles used for work. Changes can be better carts, pulleys and other devices to take the risk away from the employee.

Back pain can be sudden and intense, but more commonly it surfaces and subsides, with factors such as too little or too much exercise, prolonged sitting, cumulative trauma, stress, muscle tension, and micro tissue tears collectively creating back ache.

In all cases, employers with Wellness and Ergonomic programs in place can take timely corrective action. For the employee, moist heat and movement are ways to counter back pain as well as over the counter anti steriodal medication such as a Ibuprophen or generic meds as long as there is no allergy to any of the ingredients.

Don't let another day pass where you or your employees suffer with debilitating back pain.