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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Back Pain At Work

Back pain, strain or injury can happen when you least expect it and from the simplest of actions. Bending, lifting, twisting the wrong way, sitting hunched at a computer, or even stepping out of your vehicle after a long day of driving. Over 80 per cent of Canadians experience back pain sometime in their lives; the majority as a result of what they do for a living. From physical labor, like construction and painting, to office work and truck driving, employees in almost every industry are at risk for back pain, strain or injury.

"People who perform physical labor for a living find that a great deal of their day-to-day tasks involve using the muscles and joints in their back. Improper lifting or moving the wrong way can easily lead to back strain or injury," says Dr. Clark Mills, president of the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors. "If that strain or injury isn't managed or treated quickly it can lead to serious pain and the inability to perform regular everyday activities."

People who sit for extended periods of time are also at risk. Sitting in a chair that doesn't provide proper back support or hunching over a keyboard can cause back strain and long-term back problems. Avoid unnecessary strain and stress on your body by positioning your chair, keyboard and computer monitor at optimal settings for your height and working style. You can talk to your chiropractor about what are the optimal settings for someone your size.

Since there are many ways to injure or strain your back at work, examine your work environment and activities to assess your risk for job-related back strain or injury. If you find your job contains risk factors, consider what you can change to reduce your risk.

"Sometimes it's a matter of modifying tasks, like changing the way you bend to lift, or taking more frequent breaks from sitting," states Dr. Mills. One of the best ways to prevent back pain and injury is to ensure your back muscles and core muscle group are strong. Just like professional athletes, everyone's back muscles require regular maintenance to keep them flexible and strong. This means doing some consistent, but simple, exercises at home. Participating in a fitness program that isolates these areas is ideal.

If you do experience even mild back pain or have a minor back injury, consult a chiropractor who can assess and treat your problem and get you back on your feet and back to work.