

## INTRODUCTION

Back injury is one of the leading causes of lost-time or restricted duty in the workplace and can lead to years of discomfort and disability. A back injury can be cumulative, as a result of repetitive motion overtime, or acute due to a sprain or muscle pull, for example.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- The amount of repetitive motion
- The maximum lifting load
- The duration the load is to be carried
- The body height, weight, strength and gender
- The position of the body to the load when lifting or carrying



## METHODS TO HELP AVOID BACK INJURIES

- Wear back braces if required to lift and carry heavy loads or if the back needs to be supported for long periods.
- Avoid twisting and turning; use legs to position and move the torso. Move the work area closer to avoid unnecessary twisting and reaching.
- Avoid leaning or bending over for extended periods. This causes fatigue and weakness in the lower back over time.
- Stretch and exercise the back before starting work each day.
- Inspect the work area for slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Inspect steps and stairs before climbing; use handrails whenever available.
- Lift with the legs. Position the body so the load is centered and supported by the body before lifting and carrying.
- Seek alternative work methods or rotating schedules if repetitive motion and sustained lifting are causing back discomfort or pain.
- Avoid sudden jerks and pulls on a load that could cause a muscle sprain or herniated disc.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What activities exist in your workplace that could cause back injury?
- What can be done in your work area to minimize causes for back injury?