

Back Injury Prevention

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Because your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand and run, it's important to take care of it. Most back pain arises from using your back improperly, so learning a few basic rules about lifting, posture and proper exercise can help keep your back in good shape. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses. Further, one-fourth of all compensation indemnity claims involve back injuries, costing industry billions of dollars on top of the pain and suffering borne by employees.

Back pain affects many people. The more time you spend sitting at a desk, in a car, or in front of the television or a computer, the more you must do to prevent back pain. Good posture, proper body mechanics, and exercise will help you prevent back injury and pain.

Good body mechanics means practicing good posture throughout the day. Keep your back in the neutral position-not too curved and not too flat. When you must stay in one position for long periods of time, take regular breaks to stretch and restore the neutral position of your back. When standing or walking keep your ear, shoulder, hip and ankle in a line. Avoid locking your knees while standing. Place one foot on a low stool if you must stand in one position for a long time and alternate feet. When seated make sure your back is supported, feet flat on the floor and shoulders relaxed. Avoid sitting in one position for more than an hour. If you must sit a lot, make it a priority to do stretching exercises. If you think that your back problems are related to your workspace, talk to your employer about having your workstation evaluated.

If your job requires you to lift heavy loads, it is very

important that you practice proper lifting techniques. When lifting, your feet should be shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly ahead of the other. Squat down, bending at the hips and knees only. If necessary, put one knee to the floor and your other knee in front of you, bent at a right angle. Look straight ahead, and keep your back straight, your chest out, and your shoulders back. This helps keep your upper back straight while maintaining a slight arch in your lower back. Slowly lift by straightening your hips and knees (not your back). Keep your back straight, and don't twist as you lift. Hold the load as close to your body as possible, at the level of your belly button. Use your feet to change direction, taking small steps. Lead with your hips as you change directions. Set down your load carefully, squatting with knees and hips only.

Even if you are active on the job or required to physically exert yourself, you should still exercise during your free time. An exercise routine will help keep your weight down, and maintaining a weight suitable to your frame reduces stress on your back. During your workout regimen, you should take advantage of stretching and strengthening exercises that enhance your back muscles. These are referred to as "core strengthening" because they target your back and abdominal muscles in your torso's midsection. Strong and tensile muscles are two essential characteristics to keeping your back in shape.

Most back problems that occur in the workplace are caused by physical stress, such as being in an awkward position for a long time, making the same motion repeatedly, and simply using your back too much or in an incorrect way. Be mindful of what causes back injuries and do your best to avoid them.

Source: Healthwise for WebMD

Global Pandemic of Novel Influenza A (H1N1)

On June 11, 2009 the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a global pandemic of novel influenza A (H1N1) was underway. This action was a reflection of the spread of the new H1N1 virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. More than 70 countries have reported cases of the novel influenza A (H1N1). The United States continues to report the largest number of cases of any country worldwide, however, most people who have become ill have recovered without requiring medical treatment. Given ongoing novel H1N1 activity to date, CDC anticipates that there will be more cases, more hospitalizations and more deaths associated with this pandemic in the United States over the summer and into the fall and winter. The novel H1N1 virus, in conjunction with regular seasonal influenza viruses, poses the potential to cause significant illness with associated hospitalizations and deaths during the U.S. influenza season.

CDC has issued interim guidance for clinicians on identifying and caring for patients with novel H1N1 in addition to providing interim guidance on the use of antiviral drugs. The priority use for antiviral drugs during this outbreak is to treat people hospitalized with influenza illness, and to treat people at increased risk of severe illness, including pregnant women, young children, and people with chronic health conditions.

Vaccines are a very important part of a response to novel H1N1 influenza and the U.S. Government is aggressively taking early steps in the process to manufacture a novel H1N1 vaccine, working closely with manufacturers. CDC isolated the new H1N1 virus, made a candidate vaccine virus strain that can be used to create vaccine, and is working with other agencies and industry to begin scaling up for testing and production of a vaccine. Making vaccine is a long multi-step process requiring several months to complete. CDC has developed guidance for state and local public health department to assist them in planning for a vaccination campaign.

Individuals have an important role in protecting themselves and their families.

- Stay informed. Health officials will provide additional information as it becomes available.
- Everyone should take steps to protect your health and lessen the spread of this new virus.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. Source: (CDC.gov)

Protect Your Employees From the Flu

Once again flu season is just around the corner. The best way to protect you and your employees from the flu is to offer them flu injections at the workplace. Getting a flu vaccination is the single best way of preventing influenza according to the Center for Disease Control.

The CDC recommends getting a flu vaccination in October or November before the flu season hits. But getting vaccinated in December, or even later, will still be beneficial in most years.

HealthFirst Medical Group will be giving flu vaccinations starting in the early part of October provided we receive our order from our suppliers. The cost of the flu shot will be \$20 again this year. We have a limited supply of injections, **so please call Karina De La Cruz at (562) 926-3440 x313** to reserve your shots and schedule a date. Don't let the flu catch your employees unprotected.

