

TOOLBOX TALK for Safety Week, May 28th, 2024.

Low Back Pain

Low back pain is so common that 8 out of 10 of us will experience it at some point in our professional lives. The good news is that even though the pain may seem severe, it's not generally a serious problem and can be managed effectively with proper care.

Common risk factors for low back pain:

Excessive sitting – Plopping down in the easy chair after work may feel good, but it may not be helping.

Poor physical condition – If you're not in good physical condition you have a higher risk of pain.

Bending and lifting improperly – Poor ergonomics contribute to low back pain

Tips for preventing low back pain:

- Lift objects by bending at the knees and hips rather than bending at the back.
- Avoid twisting during a lift, instead move your feet to change directions rather than rotating during the lift.
- Push rather than pull to move heavy objects.
- Avoid excessive sitting. Break up time in prolonged seated positions. Use micro stretching guidelines during breaks to keep your muscles and joints loose and increase blood flow.
- Exercise regularly incorporating both an aerobic and strengthening, stretching component.

Some research-based recommendations:

- Research has shown benefit in treatments such as physical therapy which includes soft tissue and joint work.
- Stretching of the feet and calves.
- Shoe inserts and orthotics that support the arch of the foot and cushion the heel have been found useful in both the short and long term.

Attached with this Toolbox Talk is set of low back exercises recommended by Work Right NW. Ask your foreman for a printout, or request a PDF be emailed to you if you want to try some out.

Have you had low back pain?

What have you done to relieve it?

Low-Back Exercises



Prone Press-up

To mobilize the low back and stretch into extension, place your hands by the sides of your shoulders, keep your hips on the floor and extend your arms straight. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times.



Hamstring Stretch and Sciatic Nerve Mobilization

To stretch the back of the thigh, lie on your back and bring one leg towards you holding onto the back of the knee, slowly straighten your knee. Hold 20-30 seconds on each side. To decrease sciatic nerve tension, begin with a light/moderate stretch and pump your ankle back and forth. Repeat 10 times.



Quadriped Rocking

To decrease hip tightness and stretch the lower back. Begin in a quadriped position and gently rock back and forth onto hips 10 times. Slowly lower into a child's pose stretch pushing back onto your hips and keeping your arms straight in front. Hold 20-30 seconds.



Bridge Exercise

To strengthen the hips and core begin by lying on your back with your knees bent. Activate your lower abdominals, push down through your heels, squeeze your gluteals and lift your hips off the floor. Hold briefly and return to starting position. Repeat 10 times.



Piriformis Stretch

To stretch the deep hip muscles and decrease tension in the low back lie on your back with your knees bent. Cross your ankle over your opposite knee and to increase the stretch, reach through to grab onto the back of your thigh. Hold 20-30 seconds each side.



Sunrise Stretch

To decrease tension in your low back and mobilize your thoracic spine, lie on your side with hips and knees bent to 90 degrees. Start with hands together, then open the top arm, rotation at your torso into an "open book" position. Repeat 5-10 times each side.



Dying Bug Core Exercise

To strengthen the core, begin with activating and contracting your lower abdominals to stabilize your spine, then lift both arms and legs, alternating between sides straightening an opposite arm and leg and returning to the start position. Repeat 10 times each side.



Bird-Dog Exercise

To strengthen the core and low-back, begin in a quadriped position. Activate the lower abdominals and slowly extend out one arm and the opposite leg. Hold 5 seconds and return to start position. Repeat 10 times then repeat with the other side.

Prior to starting any fitness program, check with your physician to make sure you are healthy enough to begin an exercise routine.



ICE

The beneficial effects of ice are achieved best with crushed ice placed directly on the skin surface for 5-20 minutes in order to reduce tissue temperature and decrease nerve conduction velocity (pain reduction). Avoid using padding between the skin surface and ice unless using a commercial ice pack.



SLEEP

The majority of tissue healing and growth is done during sleep and is crucial for overall healing potential. The National Sleep Foundation recommends a minimum of 7-9 hours of sleep for a healthy adult.



HEALTHY EATING & HYDRATION

Proper diet and hydration is essential to meet the nutritional requirements needed by the body to heal tissues. Adequate amounts of carbohydrate, protein, and fat are needed for cellular synthesis and growth as well as help to fight against illness and injury. Conversely, diets high in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol are linked to chronic diseases like coronary artery disease, stroke, diabetes and certain forms of cancer. Drinking a minimum of 10 glasses of water a day also keeps the tissues hydrated and functioning for baseline daily needs.



FITNESS & CONDITIONING

Want the key to reducing the risk of things like aging, alzheimers, injury, heart disease, dementia, bone health, stomach problems... need we go on? You know the answer: EXERCISE! Quality physical activity, both aerobic exercise AND strength training, are cure-alls, literally. Aerobic exercise has even been shown to grow regions in your brain that shrink with age! Even little things like standing more and sitting less are linked to lower risks of cancer, diabetes, and all-cause mortality. The World Health Organization and US Centers of Disease Control and Prevention advise adults to do 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise weekly and strengthening two times per week. If this sounds overwhelming, do simple things like walking, cycling, or gardening combined with light weight training or yoga. Exercise doesn't have to be a dirty word. If you enjoy what you're doing, you will be much more likely to stick to it and create a habit to get you living living your best!

