

**Loss Control Services: SAFETY TOPIC OF THE MONTH**

---

**M.0803: BACK SAFETY – Do’s and Don’ts****Facilitator Outline**

**Purpose:** Monterey Educational Risk Management Authority - Loss Control Services provides these monthly topics to promote safety awareness, injury prevention and regulatory compliance for member districts. These topics may be adapted specifically to the needs of your district by editing and reformatting. If desired, the topic may be expanded with video/DVD, Powerpoint, or other media.

**Instructions:** Make copies of the handouts and quiz for those attending. As the facilitator for this training – please keep track of attendance in accordance with your district recordkeeping requirements. Thirty minutes should be allocated to allow for review/discussion of the handouts and the quiz – it is possible to condense the topic time to 15 minutes or less if time constraints are severe. You may use the quiz as a pre or post discussion topic; using it as a pre-quiz and then discussing the answers after review of the materials is a good way to assure an interactive session in a minimal amount of time.

**Answers to Handout #2: Back Safety Quiz - Do’s and Don’ts**

1. Which of these activities could cause a back injury?  
a) improper lifting    b) pushing heavy objects    c) awkward reaching    **d) a, b, and c**
2. Which word is not related to the anatomy of the back: *The hypoid bone is part of the throat.*  
a) ligaments    b) vertebrae    **c) hypoid bone**    d) discs    e) spine
3. Poor lifting techniques are the most common cause of back pain    **True**
4. Good housekeeping and use of equipment properly reduces risk of back injury.    **True**
5. Face the load before attempting to lift it.    **True**
6. Avoid bending the knees when lifting.    **False**
7. Which of the following are risk factors that may contribute to a back injury?  
a) age (*young or elderly!*)    b) physical condition (*good strength and condition helps but proper techniques are still needed*)    c) fatigue    d) over exertion (*both fatigue and over exertion lead to less careful techniques and make the body more susceptible to injury*)    **e) all are risk factors**
8. Grasp the load and gain control of it before attempting to lift it.    **True**
9. To put a load down, it is best to:  
a) drop it and jump back quickly    b) get help from someone    c) use a ramp or conveyor  
**d) reverse the proper lifting method**    e) none of these are correct    f) all of these are correct  
(*To put the load down, just reverse the steps, lowering with your legs, placing your feet in the proper position, and keeping the load close to your body.*)(*Note: “b” is not a trick answer - if you need help to set the load down, maybe it was too heavy in the first place but there may be a circumstance where having help is necessary.*)
10. It is best to lift gradually using the legs and not the back.    **True**
11. The “bonus” question adds extra feedback and interactive discussion from the group.

---

Gary Metzler, MERMA Loss Control Manager may be contacted regarding this topic by email or phone:

**Email: gmetzler@merma.org    Phone: (831) 783-3300 x13**

## **Back Safety Handout #1 – Do’s and Don’ts**

- A. If you’ve ever suffered from a pulled muscle, sprain, charley horse, or backache, chances are you could have prevented it. More than 250,000 workers a year incur some kind of muscle injury. These are most often the result of using improper lifting methods, although climbing in and out of trucks, pushing heavy objects, or an awkward reach or bend can do the damage. Your back is one part of the body that may never quite return to its former delicate structure after an injury, because repairs are rarely 100 percent effective. That’s why it is so important to take precautions that can prevent the injury in the first place.
- B. It is worth repeating: The most common source of muscle ache and pain is poor lifting methods. One work injury out of four results from incorrect handling procedures or from using the wrong equipment. When you straighten up after bending over, the muscles, vertebrae, ligaments, and discs in your back bear more than a quarter of a ton of strain. If you lift with your back at the same time, the weight of the object is multiplied 15 times.
- C. Translated into lost time from work, such aches and pains cost millions of dollars a year, most of which is spent on pain killers in a futile search for relief. Because we bring most muscle aches and pains on ourselves, the best medicine is a dose of prevention.

Falls can also result in serious back injuries, so it’s important to be cautious in the use of ladders and stairs, prompt in the cleanup of spilled material, and meticulous in keeping tripping hazards off walkways. The most important protection against back injuries, however, is to know and to follow the techniques of safe lifting. Here they are:

- ▷ Make sure the path you’ll be taking is free of obstructions or slipping hazards.
- ▷ Know your lifting ability and get help with heavy or awkward loads.
- ▷ Face the load you are trying to lift.
- ▷ Bend at the knees with your feet about 20 inches apart (approximately shoulders’ width), one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- ▷ Grasp the load and gain control before you attempt the lift.
- ▷ Watch out for nails or other protrusions that could cause cuts or other types of injuries.
- ▷ Keep the load close to your body.
- ▷ Lift gradually with your legs, not your back; don’t jerk the load.
- ▷ When you set the load down, watch for pinch points.
- ▷ To put the load down, just reverse the steps, lowering with your legs, placing your feet in the proper position, and keeping the load close to your body.

These reminders may help you on the job:

- ✓ Gear your activity to your age and physical condition. Physical exertion is an excellent body builder, but it should not be carried to excess. Stop and rest when you feel tired.
- ✓ When entering or leaving a truck cab, use the handgrips and make sure the step-ups are dry and clear.
- ✓ If you have a job that allows little movement, it is important to watch your posture and change your working position as often as you can. Don’t become tense—rest the muscles that are constantly in use.

***Take time each day to remind yourself of what you are doing. In short, use your head to save your back!***

**NOTES:**

**Handout #2: PRE -QUIZ - Back Safety – Do’s and Don’ts**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Please provide the best answer for each question – the “best” answer may be open to discussion during review of the quiz!

1. Which of these activities could cause a back injury?  
a) improper lifting    b) pushing heavy objects    c) awkward reaching    d) a, b, and c
2. Which word is not related to the anatomy of the back:  
a) ligaments    b) vertebrae    c) hypoid bone    d) discs    e) spine
3. Poor lifting techniques are the most common cause of back pain.    True    False
4. Good housekeeping and use of equipment properly reduces risk of back injury.    True    False
5. Face the load before attempting to lift it.    True    False
6. Avoid bending the knees when lifting.    True    False
7. Which of the following are risk factors that may contribute to a back injury?  
a) age    b) physical condition    c) fatigue    d) over exertion    e) all are risk factors
8. Grasp the load and gain control of it before attempting to lift it.    True    False
9. To put a load down, it is best to:  
a) drop it and jump back quickly    b) get help from someone    c) use a ramp or conveyor  
d) reverse the proper lifting method    e) none of these are correct    f) all of these are correct
10. It is best to lift gradually using the legs and not the back.    True    False
11. Bonus Question: Do you have something to add to the discussion regarding your experience with situations involving back safety?

