



## Back Pain

Four out of five adults have back pain severe enough to interrupt their daily routine at least once in their life. The following are some common causes of back pain and tips to prevent injury:

- **Poor posture** - Stand tall with your ear, shoulder, hip, and ankle in a line. Balance weight evenly over your feet. Sit tall in your chair with your shoulders back, feet on the ground, and your low back supported by the chair back.
- **Stress and tension** - Learn to manage stress and use your breaks to relax and move around. Even gentle exercise is known to reduce stress levels.
- **Bending/twisting while lifting** - Use good lifting techniques. Use legs to lift the load, then shuffle your feet to make the turn.
- **Tight muscles** - Gently stretch muscles each day, particularly those that are most subject to injury, including back, hamstrings, and shoulders. Self-massage can be very soothing.
- **Repeat minor strains or “microtraumas”** - We know that many injuries are the result of repeat minor offenses to the musculoskeletal system. These “microtraumas” can result from lifting as little as 20 pounds!
- **Weak trunk muscles** - Stay physically active to maintain good muscle tone. As little as 20 minutes of exercise a day can decrease your chances of getting hurt. Take the stairs, instead of the elevator, and park a little farther out in the parking lot so you get a longer walk to work.

Those working with patients must be very careful when lifting and moving patients. Always ask for help from a co-worker or page the Lift Team (Hospitals).

Training in back care and lifting techniques is offered through several different OHSU organizations. Contact Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (503 494-7795) for more information.

