

Soft Tissue Injuries – Strain & Sprain Prevention

Employees should be closely observed by supervision to ensure that they are working safely and that material handling practices and other repetitious work procedures are being performed correctly. Training should be available to employees focusing on common material handling movements such as bending, lifting, twisting, reaching, and carrying. After the completion of this training, first line supervisors must be encouraged to continue the educational process by correcting improper behavior.

1. Set a goal for strain/sprain injury reduction. Communicate to employees and supervisors that you are determined to reduce accidents and injuries.
2. Determine those work activities that most commonly generate strain/sprain type injuries. Focus your attention to these activities first.
3. Determine if there are work activities that are not necessary to complete the job.
4. Perform, and later analyze, a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) for those jobs which generate or have potential to cause strain/sprain injuries.
5. Review workstations, tables, and racks for proper heights. It is common to find that employees are over-reaching during certain tasks such as parts pick up, racking, boxing, preparation and placement.
6. Provide educational training to employees and supervisors. Many competent resources are available today to assist you in training your employees.

Injury Causes	Back Function	Wellness Issues	Strength/Stretching
Weight Control	Ergonomics	Bending	Lifting
Reaching	Carrying	Housekeeping	Relaxation

7. Require employees to use the “buddy system” for lifting and handling heavy, awkward or bulky objects. (This is often overlooked and not considered an important element to strain/sprain prevention.)
8. Utilize mechanical lifting devices including forklifts, hand trucks, and hoists when moving objects from one location to another. (Employees often overlook the importance of these devices.)
9. Consider job rotations (i.e., per shift) to help reduce cumulative trauma strains, by providing relief to vulnerable body locations (i.e., wrists, hands, back) which experience frequent repetitive use.
10. Make use of hand tools (and other devices) which are ergonomically designed to help reduce cumulative trauma strains to employee hands, wrists, arms, shoulders.
11. Investigate all strain/sprain-related accidents to ensure that the injury is work-related and make the necessary changes to prevent future injuries. (Occasionally, some strain and sprain injuries may not be related to your worksite and may have been caused by another job or personal activity)
12. Implement the use of lumbar support devices (i.e., air belt style) as part of your back injury prevention program. (It is very important that all back belts be carefully implemented after thorough education regarding proper use and limitations.)
13. Review housekeeping practices to help reduce slip, trip and fall hazards and associated injuries. Be alert to fluid spills/leaks, trip hazards, items laying about the floor, cluttered corners, aisles and walkways.