

Caring for your Spine

The Back and The Work Place

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Workplace Ergonomics:

Some back problems are related to repetitive activity or unexpected trauma at the workplace. Research has revealed that intense or prolonged psychological stress may contribute to abnormal posturing and chronic muscle tension that can contribute to back problems and related pain. All attempts should be made to reduce stress and postural strain at the workplace. One of the easiest things to modify at the place of work is the workstation.

Any individual who uses a computer should make sure that the level of the monitor and keyboard promotes good spinal posture. The refresh rate of the monitor should be set as high as possible, this controls how many times per second the screen flickers. A low screen refresh rate creates eyestrain and fatigue. It is important for the worker to also take frequent micro breaks, which relax muscles and reduce pressure on components of your spine. For telephone users, it is important to use a comfortable and convenient headset to avoid the habit of holding the phone between the shoulder and head. Cradling a phone as you type or write is an obvious induced stress on to the cervical spine. One of the most common contributing factors to back pain is the performance of repetitive or heavy lifting, carrying, pulling, or pushing.

Employees should be trained on how to lift properly. Specialized waist and shoulder support belts can be used to limit a worker's exposure to excessive low back rotation and flexion. Workers should be instructed to request help when lifting heavy or awkward items. Companies should post proper lifting guidelines at visible locations in order to reduce the incidence of back injuries at work. Specialized use of spine protectors via corsets and braces can be extremely helpful, providing additional support to the spine and serving as postural reminders when lifting.