



## eSafetyLine

### Common Back Injuries

The backbone is a complex combination of bones (vertebrae), shock absorbing pads (discs), ligaments, muscles and tendons. Nerves run from the spinal cord through spaces between the vertebrae to all the body parts. Because of this complexity, injuries are more a probability than a possibility. Any time you bend, lift something or even sit leaning forward large amounts of stress are put on the components of your back and spine. Over time these movements can start to wear out and damage the delicate structures of the back. Many of the common problems that lead to back pain are the result of this injury and degeneration.

The discs between the vertebrae are an especially weak spot in the back and are prone to injury and degeneration. Degeneration simply means that the disc begins to wear and break down caused by use. The weakness can allow the soft cushioning material to be squeezed out, sort of like toothpaste getting squeezed out of the tube. This causes a bulge in the side of the disc or what is called a herniated disc. The bulge has no where to go but to press against the nerves leaving the spine. 90% of herniated discs occur in the lower back. When this occurs the common symptoms are:

- Back pain that may travel down the leg
- Leg pain
- Foot numbness and/or weakness
- Difficulty walking.

If the herniated disc is in the neck, similar symptoms will occur but involve the arm and hands instead of the feet and legs. Treatment will include rest, pain medication, and physical therapy with surgery a definite possibility.

Another common form of back injury is a back strain or sprain. A strain occurs when the muscles of the back are stretched or torn. However a sprain is when the ligaments that support the back are stretched or torn. Whether it's a strain or a sprain, the symptoms are the same: PAIN; back pain and stiffness that worsens with activity. Common treatments include rest, with pain medication along with a regiment of stretching exercises that will help strengthen the muscles of the back.

These are two of the more common back injuries seen at a jobsite. Prevention of them will be basically the same; good physical health, good posture and exercise.

### **Discussion Questions**

What is the difference between a back strain and a back sprain?

What are some of the common symptoms for a herniated disc?

# MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

TOPICS ADDRESSED: \_\_\_\_\_

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## EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

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ACTION TAKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

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Supervisor's Signature

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Date

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Safety Coordinator's Signature

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Date