



A Healthy Back

Parts of a Healthy Back

Your back consists of a *spinal column* that serves as the foundation of the entire body. The spinal column includes:

- Vertebrae (bones)
- Disks (pads between the vertebrae)
- Ligaments connecting the vertebrae
- The spinal cord (nerves that extend to other parts of the body)

Surrounding and attached to the spinal column are muscles in the back and stomach. When these muscles, together with leg muscles, are in shape, they are strong enough to keep the spinal column healthy. But if the muscles aren't strong enough, parts of the spinal column can be damaged.

The Importance of Exercise

Proper exercise can help strengthen back, leg, and stomach muscles. Stronger muscles help reduce the risk of back injury. Simple, regular exercises can help promote overall health, increase flexibility, and relieve soreness and tension. Remember these exercise tips:

- Check with a doctor before starting an exercise program to avoid any harmful exercise.
- Begin an exercise program slowly, and gradually build up to 20-minute sessions.
- Short periods of regular, routine exercise are more beneficial than occasional periods of long or strenuous exercise.
- Exercise might cause minor soreness or stiffness, but it should never be painful.

Introduction

Back injuries are among the most common workplace injuries. They range from minor muscle strains to serious and permanent damage. Often a serious back injury or continuous back strain can mean a lifetime of back pain. You can take care of your back by:

- Learning how to lift objects safely.
- Getting help or using mechanical aids.
- Exercising to strengthen back, leg, and stomach muscles.

Causes of Back Pain

Back injuries and pain are caused by one or more of the following:

- Constant strain from poor posture when standing or sitting.
- Sudden twisting of the back.
- Lifting incorrectly, which puts too much strain on muscles.
- Being overweight, which puts constant extra strain on back and stomach muscles.
- Being out of shape from lack of exercise.

If exercise hurts, STOP!