

Preventing Strains & Sprains

Strains and sprains are injuries that usually affect the back, arms, and shoulders and are generally caused from lifting, pushing, reaching or pulling. There is a slight difference from a sprain and a strain, although they both can result from the same type of workplace activities. A sprain is a damaged ligament, which is the tissue that connects bone to bone, whereas a strain is an injured muscle or muscle tendon, which is the tissue that connects muscle to bone. Preventing strains and sprains is much easier than treating them; the following are a few simple tips to keep in mind at the workplace to reduce the risk of injury.

When lifting heavy objects, first evaluate if the load is too heavy to comfortably lift on your own; don't hesitate to ask for help if needed. Possible options for working with heavy loads are either to break the load into smaller more manageable sections, or get the help of a coworker or mechanical device. If you have the option to push or pull a heavy object, always choose to push and be sure to keep proper body alignment, using your body weight and leg muscles. When lifting a heavy object, be sure to lift with your knees, and maintain proper posture: don't hunch over or twist your body unnecessarily. Pay attention to the natural alignment of your spine, and keep as much of the load at waist level, if possible.

When reaching or bending, position your body in a neutral, comfortable position and stay as close to the work area as possible. For example, use a ladder to better position yourself to a higher work area, being sure to maintain your arms at shoulder level. When bending, position yourself as close to your work area as possible: squat down to be in direct alignment with your work, instead of potentially injuring yourself in an awkward position. Be sure to take consistent breaks and shift your weight as needed.

As always, a general rule for preventing injury is to take care of your entire body. Take time to exercise, maintain a healthy and balanced diet and be sure to let your body rest. Keeping yourself in good physical condition is crucial to overall wellbeing.

