

Back Pain

Back pain is one of the most common complaints contributing to missed days at work.*



What causes back pain?

Injuries:

- Sprains
- Traumatic Injury

Degenerative problems:

- Intervertebral disc degeneration
- Spondylosis
- Arthritis or other inflammatory disease

Nerve and spinal cord problems:

- Spinal nerve compression, inflammation and/or injury
- Sciatica
- Spinal stenosis
- Spondylolisthesis
- Herniated or ruptured discs
- Infections
- Cauda equina syndrome
- Osteoporosis

Things to consider for employees with back pain conditions:

Employers and their employees can work together to identify changes that can potentially reduce the impact of low back pain. Working as a team can result in reduced absenteeism and improved outcomes for both you and the employee.

There are several conditions that can cause low back pain as well as many factors that can exacerbate back pain such as the aging process, smoking, obesity, occupational duties, and physical fitness levels.



Smoking cessation



Stretching



Maintaining a healthy weight



Regular exercise



Utilization of other resources such as your health insurance provider

How can employers partner with employees to prevent or reduce absenteeism?

- **Body mechanics**
 - Proper lifting
 - Proper sitting posture
- **Temporary job modifications**
 - Two person lifts
 - Shared job responsibilities
- **Utilizing equipment to reduce strain**
 - Sit stand workstations
 - Padded floor mats
 - Alternate seating—ergonomic chairs
- **Build in scheduled breaks**
- **Formal ergonomic assessments**

*Reference: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. website <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Fact-Sheets/Low-Back-Pain-Fact-Sheet>

How can you accommodate an employee with back pain?

Task/Topic	Sedentary	Light	Medium	Heavy/ Very Heavy
Ergonomic chairs (i.e. adjustable seat, armrest height, and headrests)	✓	✓		
Height adjustable workstations	✓	✓		
Footrests	✓	✓		
Scheduled stand/stretch breaks	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adjusted work hours	✓	✓	✓	✓
Proper body mechanics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anti-fatigue floor mats		✓	✓	✓
Job task restructuring		✓	✓	✓
Two-person lifts			✓	✓
Shared job responsibilities			✓	✓

Sedentary Work: Exerting up to 10 pounds occasionally and/or negligible amount of force frequently. Sedentary work involves sitting most of the time but may involve walking or standing for brief periods of time.

Light Work: Exerting up to 20 pounds of force occasionally and up to 10 pounds of force frequently. Physical demand requirements are in excess of those for sedentary work.

Medium Work: Lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling 20-50 lbs. occasionally, 10-25 lbs. frequently or up to 10 lbs. constantly.

Heavy Work: Lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling 50-100 lbs. occasionally, 20-50 lbs. frequently, 10-20 lbs. constantly.

Very Heavy Work: Lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling over 100 lbs. occasionally, 50+ lbs. frequently, 20+ lbs. constantly.

Definitions of Frequency:

Occasionally: 1/3 of workday Frequently: up to 2/3 of workday Constantly: over 2/3 of workday

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