Body Mechanics

Home Care Division of the Bureau of Home and Community Services
Annual Required In-service

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Objectives
• Recognize who is at risk for back injury
• Recognize risk factors contributing to back injury

Objectives
• Recognize common mistakes
• Understand and apply the rules of good body mechanics

Definition
• Body Mechanics
  – The way we use our bodies to complete various tasks during activities of daily living; especially important as it relates to taking care of our backs

Who’s at Risk for a Back Attack?
• Middle aged (35 - 55)
• Employed
• Men and women = risk
  – Women at greater risk after menopause
Who’s at Risk for a Back Attack?

- 80% will experience back pain at some point in their lifetime
- Social and physiologic factors increase risk

Risk Factors

- Excess weight
- Smoking
- Poor work postures and lifting practices

Why Do I Need to Know?

- A good understanding can help reduce your risk of injury

Application of Body Mechanics

- Your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand and run
  - Proper care enables you to perform your job well and live your life with a healthier back

Application of Body Mechanics

- A significant number of injuries occur every day in the delivery of health care services to patients in hospitals, rehab centers, ECFs, as well as patient’s homes
Application of Body Mechanics

• Some injuries are the result of improper body mechanics and could have been prevented

• Many home situations are less than ideal but a good understanding and the application of proper body mechanics can greatly reduce your risk of injury

• Most back injuries are rarely the result of a single physical injury but rather from cumulative effects of bad habits

• Faulty body mechanics both during work as well as daily activities outside of work are likely damaging your back even if you haven’t noticed any pain

Application of Body Mechanics

• Combination of factors usually involved:
  – Poor posture
  – Stressful living and working habits
  – Loss of flexibility

• Combination of factors usually involved:
  – General decline in physical fitness
  – Faulty body mechanics
The REAL Culprit

- Cumulative effects are the real causes of back problems!

Body Mechanics Rationale

- Practicing good body mechanics is one of the most important aspects of back care to help avoid common mistakes often made when working with patients

Common Mistakes

- Lifting with the back bent and the legs straight
- Using fast jerking motions
- Bending and twisting at the same time

Common Mistakes Continued

- Load too far away
- Poor planning
- Poor communication
- Insufficient strength

Basic Application of Rules

- Even though situations in the home may vary, it’s important to remember and utilize the rules of good body mechanic PRIOR to initiating patient care activities

Basic Application of Rules

- Keep stomach tight when performing a lift
- Keep low back in the normal “S” curve
- Keep work heights at appropriate level
### Basic Rules

- Allow patient to move in direction of strongest side
- Get as close to the load as possible
- Replace twisting motions with pivoting or side stepping

### Basic Rules

- Wide, solid base of support
- Keep head and shoulders upright
- Use your body weight and momentum

### Basic Rules

- Go through a mental checklist:
  - Plan ahead
  - Necessary equipment
  - Clear path

### Basic Rules

- Dry floor, non-slip footwear
- Secure furniture and assistive devices
- Determine need for help

### Important Rule

- Enlist as much of the patient’s help as possible!

### Travel Time

- The care of your back and the practice of good body mechanics includes the time you spend traveling in your car
Preventive Driving Measures

- Seat appropriate distance from steering wheel
- Lumbar support cushion
- Commuter stretches
- Get out of car and move about every 45 - 60 minutes

Preventive Driving Measures

- When exiting a car, turn your whole body to the side
- Place both feet on the ground and stand up carefully
- Reverse the procedure when entering a car
- Sit down first, then swing both legs in together so that you don’t twist your back

Best Treatment for Back Pain

- PREVENTION
- PREVENTION
- PREVENTION
- Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one!

Only You Can Prevent...

- It’s up to you to practice the basic rules of good body mechanics and decrease your chance for back injury

Contact Information

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Additional Resources

(Search Body Mechanics)

- www.spineuniverse.com
- www.nonprofitrisk.org
- www.usnews.com
- www.healthlink.mcw.edu
- www.healthscout.com
- www.shb.ie/content1348012108_1.cfm
  – (Offers a back care booklet and good posture info and illustrations)