

Prevent Lower Back Pain



Lower back pain, alongside cancer, are the top two conditions that are most costly to the NYCDCC Welfare Fund and its participants. Our members are prone to work-related lower back pain because of the strenuous work they perform. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA"), lower back pain is also a leading cause of lost work-time, and it accounts for up to 240 million lost work days per year. Overall, lower back pain is the fifth most common reason for visiting a doctor.

Lower back pain can be caused by:

- Constant lifting of materials
- Sudden movements
- Whole body vibration
- Lifting and twisting at the same time
- Bending over for long periods of time

In its simplest terms, many of these conditions could theoretically be prevented if the amount of heavy, repetitive activities required by the job is reduced. However, unfortunately for most of you, reducing those activities on the job is not an option. Luckily, there are other ways to prevent lower back pain as well.

Try these simple tips to help you prevent lower back pain:

Exercise regularly. Start your routine with daily stretching and strengthening exercises. This will help keep your muscles strong and reduce the risk of muscle strain. Remember, this is only a way of preventing it. If you suffer from lower back pain already, this may worsen it. In this case, wait a few days for the pain to go away to start your exercise regimen. If pain persists, consult a doctor.

Maintain proper posture. If you are standing for a long period of time, make sure to keep your head up and your stomach pulled in.

Try a sleeping position that will protect your back. Most doctors suggest that you sleep on your side with your knees pulled up slightly toward your chest. If you prefer to sleep on your back, although it is not recommended, make sure to put a pillow under your knees and another under your lower back.

Be careful when lifting. When lifting heavy materials, make sure to bend your knees and keep your back straight, while pulling in your stomach muscles. Also, hold the object close to your body as you stand up. This will lessen the strain on your back, and put more pressure on your legs. Do not bend over from the waist and do not twist your body while lifting!

Just remember, if you suffer from lower back pain, don't ignore it! Make sure to get it checked early before it develops into something worse that may require surgery. If you need to find a doctor for your back pain in the Empire BlueCross BlueShield network, you can visit www.empireblue.com. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your symptoms and possible treatment options.

To learn more about prevention and treatments for lower back pain, you can check out the following website links:

- www.spine-health.com
- www.osteopathic.org
- www.mayoclinic.org

