

## **Body Mechanics**

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

**Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health  
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## **Faculty**

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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

### **Risk Factors**

- Previous occurrences of back trouble
- Physical fitness not a predictor of risk but physically fit people do recover more quickly

### **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

### **Application of Body Mechanics**

- 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

### **Application of Body Mechanics**

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

### **Application of Body Mechanics**

- 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

### **Application of Body Mechanics**

- 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](http://www.spineuniverse.com)
- [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org)
- [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)
- [www.healthlink.mcw.edu](http://www.healthlink.mcw.edu)
- [www.healthscout.com](http://www.healthscout.com)
- [www.shb.ie/content1348012108\\_1.cfm](http://www.shb.ie/content1348012108_1.cfm)  
– (Offers a back care booklet and good posture info and illustrations)