



PREVENTION OF BACK INJURIES IN FARMING

Back injuries are a physical disability resulting from muscle or ligament strain or sprain, ruptured discs, osteoarthritis or stress. Back injuries are often devastating to farmers, who rely heavily on manual labor, placing enormous amounts of strain on the back. Because of the necessity of manual labor in farming, time lost for a back injury can most devastating.

WHY ARE FARMERS AT GREATER RISK FOR BACK INJURIES?

- A. Often are lifting heavy objects**
- B. Sit for long periods of time without breaks**
- C. Operate heavy equipment with lack of suspension while riding on rough or bumpy terrain**
- D. Use a repetitive motion**

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON RISK FACTORS FOR BACK INJURIES?

- A. Being overweight (*poor stomach muscles result in strain on the back*)**
- B. Poor physical condition**
- C. Smoking**
- D. Improper lifting techniques**
- E. Poor posture**

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY RISK OF BACK INJURY?

A. Maintain good posture

Step forward with the entire body instead of reaching keeping your feet and shoulder width apart

Resist slouching which increases strain on the neck and back

Distribute weight evenly when sitting or standing (*don't lean too far forward or back.*)

Use a stool whenever possible. Reaching upward arches your back!

Use arm rests which help support the upper back and shoulders

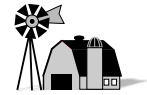
Sit with your buttocks "tucked under" to eliminate the hollow in the back

In tractors, adjust the seat so knees are raised and the back is straight

B. Conduct Back Strengthening Exercises

Abdominal Exercise – Pelvic Tilt

- Lie on the floor with your knees flexed
- Force the small of your back against the floor while tightening your stomach muscles (*Keep your head and shoulders relaxed and on the floor.*)
- Hold for 5 seconds



- Perform daily starting with 5 repetitions adding one a day until you reach 40

Trunk Strengthening - Partial Sit-Ups

- Maintain the pelvic tilt
- Flex knees while raising head, back and shoulders off the floor
- Keep elbows straight, reach toward your knees
- Hold position for 5 seconds
- Perform daily starting with 5 repetitions adding one a day until you reach 40

Back Strengthening – Back Extension

- Lie on stomach.
- Place pillow under waist and a rolled towel under forehead.
- Place arms by sides, palms down.
- Roll your shoulders back by squeezing shoulder blades together.
- Lift head and arms up approximately 1 inch.
- Keep your chin tucked in with eyes on the floor.
- Hold position and count to five.
- Do 40 daily.

C. Perfect your lifting technique

Never lift anything above your elbow (*It throws off your balance arching your back to keep the weight of the object from pulling you forward.*)

Use a wide stance and bend the knees while flexing the abdominal muscles

Always lift with the knees! Squat; don't bend at the waist with the knees straight!

Keep the objects close to your body as you pick them up

D. Use assistive devices whenever possible

Carts

Wheelbarrows

Wagons

Tools

Ladders

E. Automate tasks if possible

Use hitching devices and gate openers prevent having to get off and on tractors frequently

Use automated feed systems prevent having to carry feed

Use self-unloading gravity boxes

F. Change positions frequently

Stretch before a task

Use a sit/stand stool when standing for a long period of time. The stool helps relieve stress on the back

Rotate tasks in order to reduce repetitive movements

G. Use steps with non-slip material to help mount and dismount to farm machinery

H. Have adequate suspension for tractors

Independent suspension seats can be installed in some tractors to absorb shock and vibration

Modify current seat cushions with ergonomically designed ones



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- Provide lumbar support
- Adjustable arm rests
- Thigh support
- More evenly distribute weight

Use a swivel seat, which help eliminate frequent turning of the upper body and twisting and turning of the back

I. Modify your sleeping habits

Have a supportive mattress (*usually a more firm mattress provides the best support.*)

Sleep on your back with knees or feet elevated or...

Sleep on your side with hips and knees bent

Don't use high pillows when sleeping on your back. (*This causes your neck to thrust forward straining your back.*)

Never sleep on your stomach. (*This causes your body to sag into the middle of the mattress.*)

POINTS TO REMEMBER!

- A. Observe your posture**
- B. Maintain a healthy weight. Reducing weight reduces strain on your back**
- C. Use a foot stool instead of reaching**
- D. Keep your knees higher than your hips when sitting**
- E. Sleep on your back or side with your knees bent**
- F. Exercise is good for your entire body, especially your back**
- G. Reduce stress as much as possible**