

Helpful tips for reducing your risk of strains and sprains

As an employee of a long-term healthcare facility you are subject to many stressors on your body. This may include awkward lifting or transfers of residents, pushing residents in wheelchairs and performing housekeeping chores such as laundry. Performing such repetitive and strenuous tasks can lead to chronic pain or injury. Try the following solutions to keep yourself injury-free on the job.

Over six million injuries occur in the workplace every year. Sprains, strains and tears to muscles and connective tissues are some of the most common injuries employees experience.

Sprains and strains can result from lifting injuries, being hit by fallen objects or even a simple misstep. Overusing your muscles can also cause these injuries. Protect yourself and others from these painful injuries by always practicing safety on the job.

Sprains

Sprains occur when a ligament has been stretched too far from its normal position. Sprains of the fingers, wrists, knees and ankles are most common.

Strains

Strains are the result of pulling too far on a muscle or by pulling a muscle in one direction while it is contracting. Strains can also be caused by repetitive movements that lead to an over-stretching of muscle fibers. Strains of the back, neck, groin and hamstring are most common.

Tips for Prevention

To help reduce your risk of sprains and strains while on the job, keep these tips in mind:

- Follow OSHA's guidelines for safe lifting, especially if your position requires you to lift particularly heavy items.
- If you are lifting something particularly heavy, use extreme caution. When in doubt, ask for help with the lift.
- Reduce repetitive movements if possible; chronic strains are usually the result of overuse.
- Use proper form while completing tasks and avoid extensive gripping, which can increase the risk of hand and forearm strains.
- Practice safety measures to help prevent falls. Avoid slippery surfaces.
- Wear proper attire, including footwear, gloves, and other applicable protective equipment.
- Consider your posture when sitting or standing for long periods of time; maintain an overall relaxed position.
- Maintain a healthy fitness level outside of work to keep your body strong and flexible.
- Stretch before you begin working and take short breaks throughout the day to stretch and rebalance your body.

If you have any questions or concerns about sprains or strains, do not hesitate to contact your supervisor.

Pay attention to any pain you experience that may be a muscle or ligament injury. You can recover from simple sprains and strains with adequate rest if you stay away from further activity until your injury heals.