

FUTURE INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGIES



PREVENTING TOMORROW'S INJURIES TODAY

Risk Control and Spinal Hygiene

Hygiene - The science dealing with the preservation of health.

Spinal - Relating to a column of bones that protects the spinal cord (and hurts like hell when injured!!)



Every company, whether it is posted on their Organizational Chart or not, must practice some degree of Risk Control in order to succeed.

The ultimate goal of any company is to prosper and that can't be done if risks are not prevented or immediately dealt with when they arise. Some departments of a company deal with production and making money, while other departments safeguard existing assets and ensure the production and growth can continue unimpeded by outside or other influences.

Did you know that individuals function the same way? If one observes the various departments of an organization, we can find similar functions being carried out by the individual in order to run our own lives. We all deal with personal production (at work, at home or even working out), finances, purchasing and maintaining equipment (cars, dish washers), PR (becoming known in the neighborhood or community, sending out Christmas cards, even getting caught up with the old college friend), sales (getting jobs, promotions, mates, or even getting kids to clean their rooms), etc.

We all have our own Risk Control departments too. This encompasses various aspects including making the right investments, who it is safe to allow into our circle of friends, we buy insurance to protect us and our property if, God forbid, it is needed. A major concern and something we continually try to protect is our health, both physically and emotionally.

We have doctor check-ups, go to the dentist 2 times a year, and even get a massage now and then. Our Risk Control Departments are functioning every single day. We know we need enough sleep to function properly, we eat what we need to provide us energy and we stay away from or moderately indulge in those things that might be fun but not the best things for us. We brush our teeth 2 to 3 times a day and shower regularly as part of our daily hygiene (helps maintain friends and jobs as well).

But is our personal Risk Control Department doing enough to keep us out of harm's way? As mentioned, we take the time to take care of our teeth, which if lost, could even be replaced. What are we doing to protect something that is perhaps more important and can't be replaced - our backs? Our elementary school teachers and parents were kind enough to educate us about dental hygiene. However, we have never been properly schooled about the risks of not taking proper care of our spines.

As "Boomers" are aging, some are painfully learning about the risks of ignoring spinal hygiene. You probably wouldn't be dating much but you could work and do recreational activities with neglected teeth. A bad back on the other hand cuts right across just about every physical activity worth doing. AND it eventually strikes against your emotional health as well.

The silly thing about the majority of back problems is that they are so very preventable. All we need is a little understanding about how they work so we don't keep putting them at risk. Once we come to understand what the spine likes, it is then easy to determine the "at risk" activities of the spine.

The spine is the protector of our spinal cord. That highway of nerves that carries impulses and grants life and function to our organs and limbs. The mechanism of the spine is something that only Mother Nature is clever enough to create. It provides protection, mobility, shock absorption, stability and helps keep us upright.

There are various physical laws that, if followed, will allow the spine to last a lifetime. If violated, the penalties can be stiff indeed. F.I.T.'s purpose is to educate people about these laws, as ignorance to them has destroyed countless lives over the millennia and has cost business and society untold billions. The adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is not just words but a FACT that has now proven to provide a whopping return on investment when applied to workplace sprain/strain injuries.

I want to cover two of the "spinal laws" with you. If these basic points are understood and followed, you will have more control over your long-term health than ever before. It could be said that the laws of the spine are comprised of misdemeanors and felonies. The spine can tolerate misdemeanors and still function. However, they do accumulate and after repeated, violations can become a felony. Innocent physical stresses add up over time and cause an accumulation of trauma. Therefore, back injuries and other sprains/strains are often called Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD's). For example, you are now sitting at your computer reading this. Your lumbar ("small" of your back) spine has a natural forward curve that creates a space or void that when seated, should be supported.

If this part of your spine is not supported while seated, we continuously lose this curve by slouching, which is the body's solution for seeking support for this area. This incorrect posture can result in disks, ligaments and muscles of the back being compromised and will weaken over time. When we sit this way in our cars, trucks or planes, we now add vibration into the mix. Just remember that the spine likes to have its 3 curves maintained (forward curves in the low back and neck and reverse curve of the mid-back) - particularly when carrying loads or if in a sustained posture.

My suggestion then, to help maintain a healthy lower back, would be to put your butt all the way to the back of the chair when seated. This will make it impossible to slouch. When you catch yourself slouching, now you know a fix for it.

Many chairs today have lumbar supports, which is nothing more than something that fills this space for you when you sit and prevents you from losing your lumbar curve. Pillows, sweatshirts, etc. can also be used if that is what's available to you.

I will now discuss a law that, if broken, is one of the felonies. When you want to remove water from the facecloth, what do you do? You wring it out. You twist the facecloth until it is tight which squeezes all the water out. In other words, you create force and torque to compress the material to expel the water. It is really effective and is a great technique that can be used on certain people's necks from time to time. However, to the spine it is a felony of the highest order.

Your cervical spine (neck area) is designed to have a nice, wide range of motion. This allows us to rotate our heads to be able to see the world around us. The lower back (lumbar) has a more restricted range of motion compared to the cervical (neck) spine so to enhance stability. This is why we have heard "do not twist when carrying a load" so many times. The lower spine doesn't like it one bit because this creates torque, pressure and compression. Think of your lumbar disks as being the facecloth above. Do we want to continually wring out our disks that, when injured, can virtually ruin our lives? Very simple solutions to this are to always move your feet to face your load versus twisting your torso so that the load you are lifting (box, laundry, child) is between your feet. Even while working at a desk you should not twist. Slide your chair to be in front of your file drawer to prevent the need to reach and twist whenever possible.

Please do the following simple homework assignment. For 3 days, I want you to be aware of all the times you twist at work and at home, including when getting your child out of the car or truck, lifting laundry, cooking, shoveling snow, groceries, getting out of bed, getting something out of your drawers in the office and other work activities that you do.

Now as your own Risk Control Officer, decide to reduce these "at risk" behaviors. Establish a personal policy that you will: Learn what it feels like to twist your torso (recognition of at-risk behavior) and will refrain from doing this from now on. I mention a personal policy because that's what it takes to embed this behavior.

If your teeth started to go downhill, you could see it and can do something about it. We can't see our spinal columns. But you can be 100% confident that it, too, deteriorates when mistreated. So, live well today so you may enjoy tomorrow. Make it a policy and live life on your terms.

These are just a couple of tips that I hope will help you. If you would like us to help your employees to become more responsible for their own health, visit our website www.backsafe.com to learn about our discoveries in employee injury prevention training. Our solutions to preventing sprain/strain injuries really work and are simple to incorporate into your business culture.

We have 1,200 Injury Prevention Specialists to help you and your employees throughout North America, or a Corporate Licensing and Train-the-Trainer programs. The power of knowledge is no more rewarding than when you can use it to help and protect others.

Prevent tomorrow's injuries today.

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