

Health Notes

Back Belts and Supports

by Dr. Mark Craft,
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The use of back braces or supports in the workplace for the prevention of injuries has drawn much attention. To reduce the costs of providing for the injured worker, industry welcomed the use of back braces on the job to reduce the number of lifting accidents. The concept sounded great! Belts were advertised to limit movement, increase intra-abdominal pressure important for lifting, reduce the strain on abdominal and back muscle activity, and keep the back warm. In time, numerous studies were launched to see if these theories were accurate. The results were nothing like what was expected.

While some workers felt more secure and stable with the use of a back support, the rate of injury did not change. The belt's influence on limitation of movement was not as great as expected, increasing intra-abdominal pressure was not influenced as much as the belt designers had predicted, and the reduction of the strain on musculature was not as significant when using belts and supports as originally theorized.

There were reports that when workers wore their belts for extended periods of time with maximum tightness, that in time the supportive muscles of the back would atrophy. The belts are meant to be worn loosely and "cinched" up only when needed for lifting support. When a lifting injury was experienced by a worker wearing their belt too tight for an extended time, and muscular atrophy had developed, the injury was much more significant than it should have been.

When these studies continued and additional data was compiled some interesting information was obtained. It appears that the use of back belts or supports in low risk workers (those with no prior history of low-back problems) had no effect on the prevention of back injuries. When high-risk workers (those with a prior history of low back problems) used back belts or supports their incidence of injury was reduced.

It is my opinion that these devices still have a place in the work place. They should be used only with proper instruction from trained personnel (I know a few). Belts should only be worn tight when the lifting task is at hand. Often when a worker stops for five seconds to "cinch" up the belt, he remembers proper lifting techniques; this is important. Workers with previous low-back injury appear to benefit somewhat from the use of a back belt or support.

These are the workers of greatest concern when injured because each episode of low-back pain becomes more difficult to recover from.

So if you choose to use a back support remember what you have just read. You'll receive the maximum benefit possible from your belt, and just might not need a chiropractor the next day. ☆

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Hot Sun

by Elyssa Garcia

I cannot stand it,
it's just too hot,
I feel like vegetables
boiling in a pot.
I can feel smoke rising,
And filling the air,
All I need is a fan
blowing through my hair!
Sun beating down,
Burning my face,
Making everything drag,
with slow motion and pace.
A pool looks so refreshing!
It could make me cool,
I jump in my suit,
And then into my pool. ☆

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