

FACT SHEET

Protect Your Back... You Only Have One!

Whose Backs Are At Risk of Injury?

Regardless of where we work, whether it be in auto, truck and bus assembly, parts plants, railways, aerospace, telecommunications, electronics assembly, foundries, fisheries and processing, airlines, offices, retail stores, mining, transportation, hotels, restaurants and health care... **all** workers are at risk from back injuries.



How Does Your Back Work?

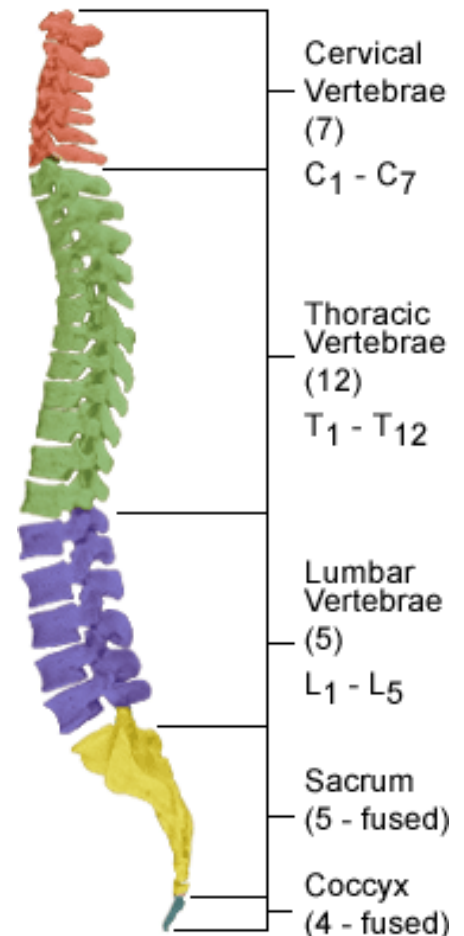
Your back is made up of 24 main bones called vertebrae. Between each are shock absorbers called discs. Ligaments bind the bones together and muscles make the entire structure move.

The back provides the ability to stand or sit upright, it stabilizes your head and, by protecting the spinal cord, it facilitates the passage of nerve signals that allow you to freely bend, lift, twist and carry.



You can hurt your back;

- ✓ If you stand or sit at work for long periods.
- ✓ If you sit all day with no backrest or on a poorly designed, nonadjustable chair.
- ✓ If you sit in a chair so high that your feet don't maintain full contact with the floor.
- ✓ If you have to work in a cramped position hunched over a workstation.
- ✓ If you have to pull or push objects, particularly those which are heavy or **awkward**.
- ✓ If you have to stretch and reach repeatedly.
- ✓ If you are exposed to whole body vibration such as when driving a vehicle.

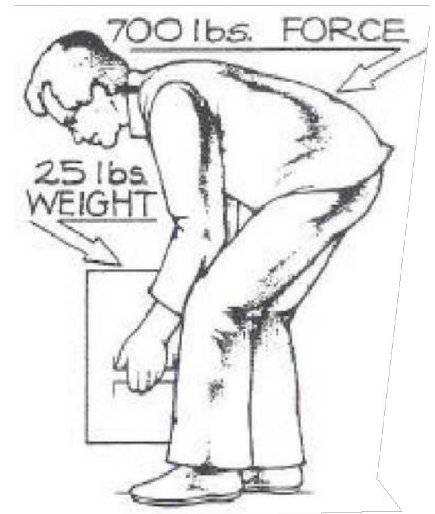


Why Does Your Back Hurt?

Damage to the vertebrae, discs, ligaments, muscles or the spinal cord and its nerves will cause back pain. You can hurt these parts of your back in a number of ways.

With respect to loading, you can injure your back if the loads;

- ✓ Are too heavy
- ✓ Are too far from your body
- ✓ Require frequent lifting
- ✓ Require twisting
- ✓ Require you to work too fast
- ✓ Have no handles



Unifor and Ergonomics:

Ergonomics is the science involved in designing work so that it accommodates the worker. As a union, Unifor is at the forefront in the field of ergonomics by:

- ✓ Working with health and safety and ergonomics committees to convince employers to change the workplace, work station, tools and work organization to prevent injuries
- ✓ Bargaining ergonomic language in our contracts
- ✓ Bargaining ergonomic expertise at the National, Regional and plant levels
- ✓ Bargaining paid time away from the job to give our bodies and minds the rest they need and deserve
- ✓ Designing and providing ergonomic training for our reps and membership
- ✓ Leading the push for Ergonomic Regulations both provincially and nationally.

How to Learn More:

You can learn more about your back or Ergonomics by contacting:

Unifor Health and Safety Department
115 Gordon Baker Road Toronto, ON, M2H 0A8
Tel: (416) 495-6558 or
1-800-268-5763
Fax: (416) 495-6552

Email: healthandsafety@unifor.org www.unifor.org

