

# FEBRUARY SAFETY TOOLBOX



## MONTHLY SAFETY AWARENESS DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Sprains and *Strains*

#### Introductory Comments

Musculoskeletal (MSDs) Injuries are group of related injuries sometimes referred to as ergonomic injuries, these injuries include joint dislocation, fractures, arthritis, sprains, and strains. Musculoskeletal injuries generally occur when the worker uses muscles, tendons, and ligaments to perform tasks in awkward positions or in frequent activities that, over time, create pain and injury. ([www.injuryfacts.nsc.org](http://www.injuryfacts.nsc.org))

A sprain is a stretched or torn ligament. Ligaments are tissues that connect bones at a joint. Falling, twisting, or getting hit can all cause a sprain. You might feel a pop or tear when the injury happens. A strain is a stretched or torn muscle or tendon. Tendons are tissues that connect muscle to bone. Twisting or pulling these tissues can cause a strain.

#### Meeting Starter Questions

- What are strains and sprains?
- How can I proactively prevent sprains and strains?
- How do I treat them?

#### Critical Safety Points

Workers in many different industries and occupations can be exposed to risk factors at work, such as lifting heavy items, bending, reaching overhead, pushing, and pulling. heavy loads, working in awkward body postures and performing the same or similar tasks repetitively. Exposure to these known risk factors for MSDs increases a worker's risk of injury, Work-related MSDs can be prevented.

**To minimize potential sprains, observe the following practices:**

- Practice safety measures to help prevent falls. For example, practice safe housekeeping by keeping work areas clear of clutter.
- Avoid strenuous activity on the job when tired or in pain.

#### Instructions:

Use this Safety Toolbox  
Talk to spark discussion  
within the employee  
group. Test knowledge  
retention with the  
associated quiz.

#### Quiz Answer Key:

1. True. This allows the least amount of stress on the body.
2. False. Lifting with your back can cause stress and injuries.
3. Rush and Run
4. True
5. False. Report injuries immediately.

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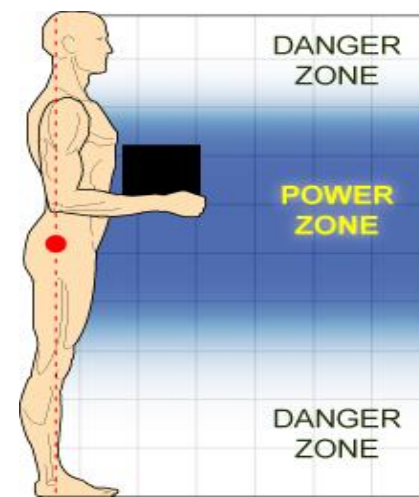


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- Use extra caution when working on slippery surfaces such as ice or wet floors.
- Always wear appropriate and proper fitting footwear for your job.
- Use extra caution when walking across uneven surfaces. These are areas where you could easily turn or twist an ankle or knee.
- When stepping off ladders, always look where you are placing your feet, before you put your full weight on them.

### To minimize potential strains, observe the following practices:

- Whenever possible, arrange your work areas to minimize the amount of heavy lifting required.
- Before any heavy lifting activity, always warm up, using moderate stretching exercises. Do not stretch aggressively as you may over-stretch and injure yourself.
- Always plan the lift. Consider the weight of the object; how far you must carry it and your route of travel. When you approach an object on the floor, try to get an idea of how heavy it may be by moving it with your foot or cautiously lifting it off the ground.
- Lift objects in the “power zone”. This is the area between mid-thigh and mid chest height. Avoid lifting objects outside this zone. Use your best judgement when lifting heavy objects. Do not attempt to lift an object that exceeds your strength.
- Always carry objects close to your body.
- Always lift slowly and smoothly.
- Avoid twisting. Always turn the whole body as one unit when changing direction while carrying a heavy object.
- Move heavy objects by pushing or pulling, whenever possible. Pushing is always preferable.
- Always stand close to the object that you are lifting and be certain that fingers and toes are clear when setting it down.
- Always lift with your legs and not your back. ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))



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### To treat sprains and strains:

To reduce swelling and pain, use RICE therapy (Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate).

- Rest the injured area by reducing or eliminating exercise and activity.
- Ice the injured area, 20 minutes at a time, 4 to 8 times a day. Your physician may compress the injured area, using elastic wraps, splints, casts, or bandages.
- Elevate the injured area, above the heart, while you are lying or sitting down. Depending on the severity, you may need to use a mobility device, like a cane, crutches, walker, or wheelchair.

**\*\* Remember to report injuries to your manager immediately.**

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Employee Name:	Division:
Signature:	Instructor:
Date:	Score:

## Toolbox- Ergonomics: Sprains and Strains

**Question 1:** Pushing or pulling heavy objects is preferred.

- TRUE       FALSE

**Question 2:** It is recommended to lift with your back.

- TRUE       FALSE

**Question 3:** What should you not do when carrying heavy objects?

- Lift slowly and smoothly       Wear appropriate footwear  
 Rush and run       Carry objects close to your body.

**Question 4:** Before any heavy lifting activity, always warm up, using moderate stretching?

- TRUE       FALSE

**Question 5:** If I have an injury, I do not need to report it until the next business day.

- TRUE       FALSE

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