



# Protect Your Back While Working



## Vocabulary words

- Joint
- Lifting
- Stretch out
- Squat
- Pressure

### What is back pain?

Back pain happens when there is a problem with your muscles, nerves, bones, joints and other parts of the back. Back pain can be mild at first and become stronger with time. It can start as a sudden strong pain that barely lets you move.

Back problems are very common in farm work. They are one of the main reasons that farmworkers miss work. It is very important for you to know how you can hurt your back at work. For example:

- Lifting things over and over
- Being in an uncomfortable position while working.
- Driving for a long period of time on a tractor or truck or any other farm machine that vibrates.
- Falling from a ladder

### What can you do to prevent back pain?

To prevent back pain you can:

- Stretch out your muscles before working in the field. This will warm the muscles up and prepare them for the tasks you need to do during the day. You should also stretch them out after work to relax them.
- If you have to lift or carry heavy things, ask for help from a coworker. If nobody is around, divide the load so it is lighter for you or use a wheelbarrow to help you.
- Organize the things you need to move. This way you will bend, stretch or twist your body less.
- Take breaks when you can.



When lifting and carrying weight, do these things:

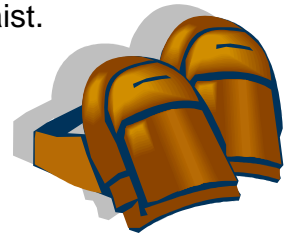
- Use the palms of your hands as you carry a load. Do not use your fingers.
- Use your knees, not your back, when you squat down to pick up an object.
- Hold what you are carrying close to your body. If you hold it away from your body, you put more pressure on your back, arms, and hands.
- When you are lifting something, spread your feet apart a bit. Put one foot slightly ahead of the other to keep your balance.
- Try not to lift anything above your shoulders.



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When you need to reach down, as when you are pulling weeds, remember to do the following:

- Squat down using one or both knees. Do not bend over using your waist.
- Use knee pads to protect your knees. They also help your back.
- When possible, stand up and stretch your back.



When you need to stand on your feet for a long time, as when you work at a processing plant, then:

- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Stand with one foot higher than the other one. To put one foot higher, use a small box. Change your position after a while.
- If you can, stand on something cushioned or on a piece of carpet.

These are some of the ways you can help yourself. Keep in mind that you can also get some help from your supervisor:

- If your back is bothering you, **TALK TO YOUR SUPERVISOR ABOUT CHANGING YOUR TASKS AT WORK.**
- **TELL YOUR SUPERVISOR IF A MACHINE IS CAUSING YOU BACK PAIN:** It is important to talk to the supervisor about the condition of any machine that is not working properly and may hurt your back. For example, if you use a tractor with a broken seat, talk about it with your supervisor. He may replace the seat for a new one that can provide better support to the back.

Remember to always follow these recommendations. It is worth it!

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### Vocabulary & Definitions

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- Joint:** A joint is where two bones meet. There are small joints like the ones you have in your fingers and there are bigger joints like the ones you have in your hips. Joints allow you bend over, jump, walk, dance, etc.
- Lifting:** When you raise or move something into a high position by using your hands.
- Stretch out:** To extend a part of your body, like your arms or legs, to full length.
- Squat:** To sit with your knees bent under you, so that your buttocks rest near your heels.
- Pressure:** The force or weight you put on something.

**NOTE:**

Did you know that there is a toll-free number that can help you find the closest health center or clinic near you anywhere in the US?

**Call “Call for Health” at 1-800-377-9968 to get more information on their services.**



# Protect Your Back While Working Skills Practice Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ➤ Activity 1: Let's Read!

Manuel has had back pain for the past two months and he has been taking pain pills to help with the pain. He drives a tractor every day. He does not want to take breaks. The tractor is an old machine that vibrates a lot and does not have a good seat. Manuel has noticed that when he twists his back, it really hurts. Today, Manuel had an accident. When he was driving his tractor, he turned his back to see if the fertilized soil was spreading well. When he tried to turn his back again to see towards the front, he could not move. He had a lot of back pain. He lost control of the steering wheel and could not reach the brakes. He hit a tree and fell off the tractor.

1. What are some of the things that caused Manuel's back pain?

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2. Check all the things Manuel could have done to prevent this accident:

- Visit the doctor and get treatment for his back pain. \_\_\_\_\_
- Keep his back pain a secret and keep working. \_\_\_\_\_
- Ask his supervisor to give him a different task. \_\_\_\_\_
- Take more breaks. \_\_\_\_\_
- Talk with his supervisor about the tractor seat. \_\_\_\_\_

## ➤ Activity 2: Getting Ready to Work

It is 6 o'clock in the morning and you are about to start working lifting buckets of tomatoes onto the truck. What are some of the things you can do to protect your back?

Write your ideas in the space below:

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## ➤ Activity 3: Now, listen up!

Listen to your teacher's instructions carefully.

Question	True	False
<b>1</b>		
<b>2</b>		
<b>3</b>		
<b>4</b>		
<b>5</b>		

## Lesson Plan

### Protect Your Back While Working

Materials needed	Handouts	Estimated time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry erase board and dry erase markers</li> <li>• Pencils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Protect Your Back While Working” Lesson</li> <li>• “Listening Activity” Handout</li> <li>• Skills Practice Worksheet</li> <li>• Pre-Post Workshop Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 hour</li> </ul>

**NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR:** To accommodate the literacy levels and educational experiences of the participants, oral and/or group activities may be substituted for reading, writing, skills practice, and survey activities.

Elements	Activities	Notes
<b>Preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the topic. Time: 5 minutes</li> <li>• Conduct the Pre-Test. Time: 5 minutes</li> <li>• Introduce the new vocabulary. Time: 5 minutes</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you ever had back pain because of the work you do?</li> <li>2. What do you think causes it?</li> <li>3. What do you do to take care of your back pain?</li> <li>4. What are some of the things you can do to prevent back pain at work?</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute Pre-Test, and ask students to turn it in when it is complete.</li> <li>• Write the vocabulary words on the board, and ask the students to read them aloud. Ask the students if they know what they mean. Provide students with the definitions. Use “Protect Your Back While Working” lesson.</li> </ul>
<b>Instructions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the lesson on “Protect Your Back While Working” Time: 10 minutes</li> <li>• Identify the vocabulary words in the lesson. Time: 5 minutes</li> <li>• Distribute and review the <i>Skills Practice Worksheet</i> with the students and ask them to complete it. Time: 25 minutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructor leads guided reading of topic.</li> <li>• Students identify the vocabulary words by circling them in the lesson.</li> <li>• <b>Activity 1:</b> Students have 10 minutes to complete this activity.</li> <li>• <b>Activity 2:</b> Students have 10 minutes to complete this activity.</li> <li>• <b>Activity 3:</b> Students have 5 minutes to complete this activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Concept Check</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct Post Test Time: 5 minutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students complete Post Workshop Survey</li> </ul>

Listening Activity Handout  
Protect Your Back While Working

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**Listening Activity**  
**Now, listen up!**

**Purpose:** To practice listening comprehension

**Time:** 5 minutes

1. Tell your students that in this activity they will practice their listening comprehension skills.
2. Say that you are going to read five different statements twice.
3. Let them know that after you finish reading the statement for the second time, they need to decide whether the statement is true or false.
4. At the end, check the students' answers to make sure they are correct. If some students do not have the right answer, invite other students to participate in the discussion until the information is clear.

True or False?

1. Lifting things again and again can hurt my back.
2. I only need to stretch my muscles after work so I can relax them.
3. It is a good idea to hold what I am carrying close to my body. This way I will not put too much pressure on my back, arms and hands.
4. When I need to pick green beans I should bend over using my waist.
5. When I work for long hours standing up, I should put one foot higher than the other one and change my position after a while.

Statement	True	False
1	●	
2		●
3	●	
4		●
5	●	



Protect Your Back While Working  
Pre-Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are back problems common in farm work?
  
2. You can prevent back injuries by doing which of the following?
  
3. How can you injure your back on the farm?
  
4. A *joint* is where two bones meet and allow you to bend and walk.
  
5. Should you tell your work leader if a machine is causing you back pain?

Circle the correct answer.

Yes

No

- a. stretching
- b. asking for help when lifting
- c. organizing the things you need to move
- d. all of the above

driving  
farm  
machines

taking a break

True

False

Yes

No

Total Correct: \_\_\_\_\_



Protect Your Back While Working  
Post-Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are back problems common in farm work?
2. You can prevent back injuries by doing which of the following?
3. How can you injure your back on the farm?
4. A *joint* is where two bones meet and allow you to bend and walk.
5. Should you tell your work leader if a machine is causing you back pain?

Circle the correct answer.

Yes

No

- a. stretching
- b. asking for help when lifting
- c. organizing the things you need to move
- d. all of the above

driving farm  
machines

taking a break

True

False

Yes

No

Total Correct: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the proper way to lift and carry heavy objects. (not scored)

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