

BACK PAIN / STRAIN



Workplace Back Injury First Response • Quick Reference



RED FLAGS — CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY IF: Loss of bladder/bowel control • Paralysis • Injury from significant fall/impact

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| MILD STRAIN | Localized pain, no radiating symptoms, can walk normally |
| MODERATE STRAIN | Pain with movement, mild muscle spasm, some activity limitation |
| SEVERE/RADICULAR | Radiating pain to legs, numbness, significant movement restriction |

1. STOP ACTIVITY

Cease the task that caused injury. Do not try to "work through" the pain. Notify supervisor.

2. FIND COMFORTABLE POSITION

Use thumb & finger. Employee will try to close—hold open.

3. APPLY ICE

Pour from nose side outward. Hold bottle 2-4" away. Gentle stream.

4. AVOID BED REST

After initial rest, brief walks every 1-2 hours help prevent stiffness. Gentle movement aids recovery

5. OTC PAIN RELIEF

Ibuprofen or acetaminophen as directed if not contraindicated. Topical analgesics (Tiger Balm, Biofreeze) or OTC lidocaine patches may also help.

6. CALL OPTICARE

Contact for evaluation, work restrictions, and return-to-duty guidance.

COMFORTABLE POSITIONS FOR BACK PAIN

- Lying on back: Place pillow under knees to flatten lower back
- Lying on side: Place pillow between knees to align spine
- Sitting (if necessary): Use lumbar support, keep feet flat on floor
- Avoid: Prolonged sitting, bending forward, twisting motions
- Movement: Short walks (5-10 min) every 1-2 hours aids recovery

✓ DO

- ✓ Report injury to supervisor immediately
- ✓ Apply ice (with barrier) for first 48-72 hours
- ✓ Take short walks to prevent stiffness
- ✓ Use proper body mechanics when moving

✗ DON'T

- ✗ Try to "push through" or ignore the pain
- ✗ Apply heat in first 48-72 hours
- ✗ Stay in bed—movement aids recovery
- ✗ Lift, twist, or bend until cleared by provider

SEEK IMMEDIATE CARE IF: Paralysis • Bladder/bowel changes • Fever with back pain • Significant trauma

Most back strains improve within 2-4 weeks with proper care. Early movement is key to recovery.

Questions?
Call OptiCare Connect