



THE COST OF INJURY: THE BACK

BY WRNW



Last month we discussed the cost of shoulder injuries. This week we continue the series with back injuries. General back injury is one of the most expensive types of injuries in the workplace. Specifically, low back pain is very common with **8 out of 10** of us destined for the dreaded injury sometime during our lifetime. Let's look at some of the most common types of back injuries.

Costs of Back Injuries

Back injuries can range from spinal, muscular, bone, or joint injuries. Here is a breakdown of the cost of three of the most common workplace back injuries.

- **Sciatica:** This common injury to the low back can be caused by repetitive heavy lifting over a long period of time. Cost can vary from \$15,000 to \$35,000, depending on the treatment. Treatment can range from pain management with regular doctor visits and physical therapy to medication, or surgery.
- **Spinal Stenosis:** Narrowing of the spinal canal happens naturally as we age, but symptoms can be aggravated by work. Treatment is similar to sciatica and may also result in surgery, which could cost \$15,000-\$25,000.
- **Muscle Sprain or Strain:** When a back sprain or strain lingers, medical intervention may be warranted including doctors visits, physical therapy, or medication. The cost of all three can total upwards of \$250+ depending on the amount of visits needed.

Is Surgery Worth the \$\$?

When treatment includes surgical intervention, the price increases exponentially. In some cases, surgery is the most appropriate treatment, but research shows some surgeries have similar outcomes to physical therapy. Other studies show that those who have surgery, are more likely to have another surgery a few years down the line.



Back Injury Prevention

The best way to avoid spending money on a back injury is to PREVENT it from ever occurring.

- **Lift objects by bending the knees and squatting** rather than bending at the back. Avoid twisting during the lift. Instead move your feet to change directions rather than rotating during the lift.
- **Push** rather than pull to move heavy objects.
- **Avoid wearing heels** over 1 inch in height.
- **Break up time** in prolonged seated positions if at a desk or behind the wheel.
- **Exercise regularly** incorporating both an aerobic and strengthening/stretching component.



Knowing the principles of being PREPARED, will help to prevent injuries and stay at work. Treat your body like you matter - you only get one in this lifetime.

Work Right NW is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialist's in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.

