



## **Avoiding Pushing & Pulling Injuries**

Throughout this June, the Comp Alliance Risk Management Department has provided our members with important safety tips on how to avoid injuries that account for the workplace injury claims we see most frequently. As the final safety tip during National Safety Month 2023, we're covering an often-overlooked movement that causes numerous workplace injuries, pushing and pulling. This motion is used to move pushcarts, use hand trucks, pull parts off equipment, stock shelves, and do overhead work. Today, we'll look at the effects of these repetitive and taxing actions on the body and ways to prevent the dangers they pose.

Pushing and pulling-type injuries tend to occur when physically overexerting oneself. Whether it be pulling heavy objects out of the bed of a truck, pushing boxes from one location to another, or moving chairs in a meeting room, the act of pushing and pulling puts great stress on the back, shoulders, legs, and arms, particularly the biceps and triceps. Many injuries from this activity happen to soft tissue like muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Common soft tissue injuries are sprains, strains, and contusions. Using the following common controls along with situational awareness, these injuries can be prevented.

- Whenever possible, push instead of pulling, as it is easier on the body and safer. Pushing uses stronger muscles and improves visibility.
- Reaching while pulling can overload the muscles and result in injuries to the arms, shoulders, back, and legs. Be aware of the potential for overload while completing even simple tasks. When reaching to pull an item, use devices, like a rope to wrap around the item, to assist with the pull.
- Pushing from an awkward position stresses soft tissues and joints. Proper body mechanics should be always used to prevent serious injuries.
- Reduce stress on the body by always using two hands while pulling or pushing and utilizing your core muscles. When initiating a push or a pull, squeeze the muscles in your abdomen. When pushing an object, make sure to always use your legs and body weight. This helps prevent overexertion by using the forces of nature to help you achieve your goal. Do this most efficiently by bracing yourself with a wide or long stance and taking long steps when traveling, using the power of your legs.



- Always face the load when pulling. Facing forward and pulling an object behind you can lead to poor body mechanics, increasing the risk of injury. Facing the load while pulling leverages body weight to pull the object safely.
- Move slowly and with purpose. Be situationally aware and identify potential hazards in the path while pulling or pushing a load. Correct the hazard and utilize mechanical means like a hand truck or pushcart when available.

Pushing and pulling are common actions in the workplace that can lead to serious injuries. Be sure employees take time to assess the situation and apply common sense techniques to get the job done in the safest manner. Practicing good lifting techniques will result in fewer back injuries from lifting, twisting, sudden movements, and bending. For more information on back injury prevention, please consult with your Comp Alliance Risk Control Specialist. We appreciate our members' attention to safety throughout the year, and especially during National Safety Month.

