

## BACK SAFETY: ONE LIFT CAN CHANGE A CAREER



### Why Back Injuries Happen

**Firefighters and rescuers are put into extreme conditions, being forced to operate in unpredictable environments while under repetitive stress.** All these demands are a recipe for low back injuries and chronic pain. Though you can't change the conditions of your job, you can take care of your joints to become resilient to these stressors. In this month's newsletter, we will cover what some of the common risks are for back injuries and what you can do today to make sure your back stays healthy and strong through to retirement.

### Common Risks

#### Be especially mindful during:

- Patient lifts and transfers,
- Stair carries,
- Overhaul and cleanup,
- Loading and unloading equipment from apparatus,
- Training evolutions when fatigue starts to set in.

Back injuries often happen at the end of calls or at the end of your shifts. This is when your focus starts to drop and muscles become fatigued, leading to poor movement patterns.

### What You Can Do

#### Here are a few helpful reminders to keep in your back pocket to help in preventing back injuries during lifting:

1. Keep the load close to your body,
  2. Lift with your legs,
  3. Avoid twisting while lifting or carrying,
  4. Communicate during team lifts,
  5. Ask for help early, before strain occurs.
- There is no benefit to toughing it out when help is available!

Looking to add back injury prevention to your current PT routine? Focus on these areas:

1. **Work on supporting your core.**
  - a. Having a strong core can help to support your spine during loading.

- a. Examples of core exercises:
  - Planks, dead bugs, controlled rotational exercises (Russian twists, Palloff press), bird dogs.
2. **Strengthen your hips.**
  - a. Your pelvis is the powerhouse of your body. Strengthening your hips can help to relieve pressure off your back and maintain balance between muscles.
  - b. Muscle areas you should focus on are your glutes and hip flexors.
3. **Don't ignore pain.**
  - a. Ignoring back pain can lead to more pain or a more serious injury.
    - i. Report pain early and seek help.
    - ii. Utilize your available resources—such as contacting your Athletic Trainer, Dr. Kelsey Loftus, for evaluation and tailored rehab. You can also have her come out to your station to go through group low back pain prevention!
4. **Focus on mobility.**
  - a. Limited hip and thoracic spine mobility can force your low back to compensate and increase your risk of low back injury.
    - i. Check out the attached lineup drill for a program with mobility exercises to focus on daily, as part of a pre-shift routine, after high-intensity calls, or all of the above! The more mobility, the better.

**Check out the attached lineup drill for programs focusing on preventing and treating low back pain!**

**Not sure where to start? Contact Dr. Kelsey Loftus for a confidential, individual appointment at the link below!**



### Dr. Kelsey Loftus

**Certified Athletic Trainer  
MCFR Health & Injury Prevention**

Did you know that you have someone working within MCFRS to provide you with quality injury care, injury prevention, and functional assessments to lengthen your time on the floor and keep you out of FROMS?

### IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Starting this year, all station visit requests will be submitted through the link attached to the QR code below. Any station in any battalion can sign up for a station visit with the choice of activities, now including:

- In-station injury clinic
- Sleep health and hacking round table discussion
- Trigger point release work
- Group instruction on prevention of common injuries (low back pain, shoulder immobility, or any area of your choosing!)
- And more!

Have an individual question about an ache or pain? Make an appointment through the link at the bottom of this page!\*

**\*ALL APPOINTMENTS ARE SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL AND CANNOT EFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO STAY ON THE FLOOR WORKING!**



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**Concentra**

**CLICK HERE TO MAKE AN INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENT!**

# Low Back Injury Prevention

**Low back injuries are the leading cause of early retirement for firefighters.**

**You can't always be in the perfect ergonomic position or environment, but you can make sure that the structures that protect your low back are resilient to stressors.**

## IT'S ALL IN THE HIPS!

A predictor of low back pain is immobility of the hips. When the muscles that control rotation, flexion, and extension at the hip are tight, they are more than likely weak. This weakness puts the muscles that connect into the low back at risk of strain and injury because they will be called to take over for the hip's weakness. So, how can you make sure your hips are mobile and stable to prevent stress on your low back?

### MOBILITY

Mobility is a lot like static stretching. When you are working on mobility, you are moving joints to promote blood flow, joint lubrication, and improve joint range of motion. **Mobility is ideally done once every day.** A good starting point is incorporating 20 minutes of mobility every shift day. Check out the exercises linked through the QR code below to incorporate into your PT routine!

### STABILITY & CONTROL

**Your joints shouldn't just be mobile they should be stable!** Working on stabilizing the muscles that protect the low back will make sure that when you get into a not so ergonomic position, your body is resilient to outside stressors.

### PRACTICE GOOD MOVEMENT PATTERNS

**When your whole body moves well, you decrease your risk of injury.** Even just a small, weak part of the whole-body chain can create compensations, overactivation of muscles, and immobility in other areas of the body. Practicing full body mobility, stability, and motor control can protect all areas at risk for injury in the body. **Want to figure out where you may be dysfunctional? Email Dr. Kelsey Loftus to schedule a Functional Movement Screen (FMS) to get an objective idea of areas that may need some work in your body. Already had the FMS done? Email Dr. Kelsey Loftus for a copy of your results and a write up of what to focus on!**

**SCAN OR CLICK ON THE QR CODE  
FOR A LOW BACK PAIN RELIEF  
PROGRAM!**

*Meant for those currently struggling with low back tension and discomfort to help relieve pain.*



**SCAN OR CLICK ON THE QR CODE  
FOR A LOW BACK INJURY  
PREVENTION PROGRAM!**

*Meant for those with previous history of back injury or those looking to decrease their risk of low back overuse injuries.*



These programs are not meant to be a substitute for individualized injury rehab or treatment. For individual evaluation or questions, please contact Dr. Kelsey Loftus.

**Want more information?**

**CONTACT YOUR ATC!**



kelsey.tanler@montgomerycountymd.gov

**CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP  
FOR A STATION VISIT**