

THE

# CONNECTION

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## SLIPS AND FALLS

An unguarded wet floor is one of the many causes that accounted for approximately 10.1 million injuries last year at work. In Michigan, 17.4 percent of all Workers' Compensation cases were due to injuries sustained from falling or slipping on the job. It is important to spot unsafe conditions which may lead to slips and falls and prevent them.

There are various ways to suffer slips and falls while working. You can slip and lose your balance, you can trip over objects left improperly in your walkway, or you can simply fall from an elevated position above the ground.

To avoid slips and falls, be on the lookout for foreign substances on the floors. Watch for deposits of water, food, grease, oil, sawdust, soap, or debris. Even small quantities are enough to make you fall.

When entering a building from the outdoors or from debris areas, clean your footwear thoroughly. Snowy and rainy weather requires a door mat at each entrance to allow for complete wiping of shoes. Don't go too fast, walk safely and avoid changing directions too sharply.

Beware of tripping hazards. Any object left in the aisles or other areas designed for pedestrian traffic invites falls. Extension cords, tools, carts, and other items should be removed or properly barricaded. If equipment or supplies are left in walkways, report it. Let the proper personnel remove it. Keep passageways clean of debris by using trash barrels. If you project trash into a can but missed, PICK IT UP.

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THE  
SLIPS  
AND  
FALLS  
SPINE

## MUSCLES

Back muscles are complex. They provide strength for movement and lengthen or constrict in response to stress. When muscles become tight or weak, as they often do at the first

sign of stress or an injury, back pain may occur. A large percentage of back pain is caused by muscle strain or soft tissue injury.

The two main muscle groups that affect the back are extensors and flexors. The extensor muscles enable us to stand up and lift objects. This group of small back muscles work cooperatively together. The extensors are attached to the rear of the spine.

The flexor muscles are in the front and include the abdominal muscles. These muscles enable us to flex, or bend forward, and are important in lifting and controlling the arch in the lower back. They encompass the gluteal muscles, beginning at the pelvis, and attach to the femur. The flexors are individual muscles that provide support for the spine. As guy wires stabilize an antenna, back muscles stabilize your spine. Imagine what happens to your back when you are not in good physical condition. Something as common as poor muscle tone or a beer belly can pull your entire body out of alignment. Misalignment puts incredible strain on the



spine. Unfortunately, without any help, back muscles begin to weaken in the third decade of life, and inactivity only accelerates this process.

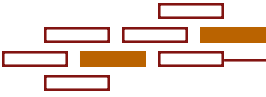
Running parallel to the spine are two bands called paraspinal muscles. They support the spine in an upright position, allow the spine to rotate, and influence posture. Muscle harmony is important for the spine to function properly. As with any of the flexor or extensor muscles, if you tax the paraspinals, they, too, will spasm.

## NERVES

The most sensitive parts of the back are the spinal cord and its branches, called nerves. If you were to take a dime and drop it twelve inches onto the exposed spinal cord, the result would be severe, permanent

damage the equivalent of paralysis. Fortunately, the cord is encased within a strong, bony spine to protect it. The cord itself runs from the base of the brain through the spinal canal and down to the first lumbar vertebrae. The nerves exiting from the spine, called peripheral nerves, are not as sensitive to injury or compression as those within the spinal canal. The nerves that emerge from between the lumbar and sacral vertebrae run down the length of the spinal canal as they make their way to the lower lumbar and sacral regions. The strands of nerves, similar to strands of horsehair, are called cauda equina, or "horse's tail" in Latin. Many of these nerves are sensitive to pain. Small nerve branches also provide sensation to the ligaments, disks, and joints of the spine.





### Good Stress vs Bad Stress

There is a difference between good stress and bad stress. Stress helps to motivate you to be successful. Stress helps you to know which situations are dangerous and which are not.

An overload of stress can bring on physical responses. You may get heart palpitations or headaches, backaches and gastrointestinal problems. You can start to feel irritable and make you overreact.

When you take everything in your life too seriously, make everything into a catastrophe, that helps to create a negative reaction from your body.

One good way to deal with stress is to take five things that really would create a crisis, such as, if you found out you only had six months to live. Would you be that concerned about getting a flat tire or your e-mail not coming in?

Put that list of five things somewhere and take a look at them periodically when you're getting stressed and say "Wow, this really isn't as important as I think it is."

Ways to reduce and avoid unnecessary

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stress include:

**Time management techniques.** Scheduling and prioritizing your commitments can make you more productive and efficient.

**Effective coping strategies.** Identifying ways of dealing with stress that don't really help and finding the best ways to cope can reduce your stress level.

**Healthy life-style choices.** Balancing your obligations, getting plenty of rest, eating well, not smoking, and limiting how much alcohol you drink are all important in reducing stress.

**Support from friends and family.** People who have a strong social support network are better able to handle life's challenges.

**Changing ways of thinking.** Stopping thoughts that cause stress, working on problem solving, and learning to communicate well are all useful tools for reducing stress.



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Walk where you're supposed to walk. Short cuts through machine areas invite accidents. Concentrate on where you are going. Horseplay and inattention leaves you vulnerable to unsafe conditions.

Hold on to handrails when using stairs or ramps. They are there to protect you should a fall occur. If you're carrying a heavy load which hampers your ability to properly ascend or descend stairs, use the elevator, or find help.

The worst falls are from elevated positions like ladders and scaffolding. They may result in serious injuries and death.

Learn and practice ladder safety and the proper use of scaffolding.

When climbing, use a ladder of proper length that is in good condition. Keep it placed on a firm surface. Do not climb a ladder placed on machinery, crates, stock or boxes. Keep the ladder's base one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height. Don't over reach. Always have control of your balance when working from a ladder. Never climb a ladder with your hands full, and always carry tools in proper carrying devices.

When using a scaffold, be sure it is properly assembled according to the manufacturer's specifications. Check carefully for defects. Standing and working planks should be level and clean. Use toe boards to prevent tools from falling and workers from slipping. Work only with people who practice scaffold safety.

Slips and falls occur every day. The extent of injuries and their recurrence can be minimized through proper safety knowledge and attitudes. Practice safety...don't learn it through "Accidental Experience."

