LOW-BACK PAIN IS A LEADING CAUSE OF JOB-RELATED DISABILITY AND MISSED WORK IN THE UNITED STATES. THE PAIN IS SO UNBEARABLE THAT AMERICANS SPEND MORE THAN $50 BILLION PER YEAR IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT GO AWAY. IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING WORK-RELATED BACK PAIN, HERE ARE SOME BACK-PROTECTING TIPS THAT MAY BRING YOU RELIEF:

1. **Lift wisely.** Take your time, get help when needed, use lifting devices, and alternate heavy lifting with less physically demanding tasks. Follow the rules of good posture while lifting:
   - Place feet at least shoulder-width apart.
   - Stand as close as possible to the object being lifted.
   - Hold the object as close to your body as you can.
   - Avoid twisting or bending forward when lifting and carrying.
   - Bend at the knees instead of the waist.
   - Tighten your stomach muscles when lifting and lowering.

2. **Avoid prolonged sitting and standing.** Walk and stretch hourly if possible.
   - For sitters: Place a rolled towel, small pillow or a specially designed seat support behind your lower back.
   - For standers: Distribute weight evenly on both feet.

3. **Sit with good form.** Align ears with the shoulders and keep chin parallel to the floor. Avoid leaning to one side and bend at the hips instead of rounding shoulders when leaning forward. Choose a supportive swivel chair with the following features:
   - Adjustable seat and arm rests
   - An adjustable back rest with a spring that moves with you
   - A seat that tilts forward

4. **Modify your workspace to fit your needs.**
   - Place your computer and other frequently used objects close to you.
   - Avoid neck pain by using a headset or special phone adapter for phone calls.

5. **Make your health a priority.** This is an important, commonly overlooked way to reduce your risk for back pain.
   - **Lose a modest amount of weight.** Even a small loss of 5–10% of your current body weight decreases stress on the muscles, ligaments, and joints in the back.
   - **Quit smoking.** It’s true, kicking the habit for good will help your back feel better.

6. **Visit your health care provider** if the above recommendations have not provided relief or you have concerns about your condition. Further testing and intervention may be necessary.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
- American Council on Exercise
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
- Medline Plus
- American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons