

TOP OFFICE INJURIES

What are the Top Injuries in a Typical Office and How Can You Avoid Them?

An office environment presents a unique set of potential injuries from other lines of work. Working virtually 100% indoors, in a seated position and usually talking on a phone, writing or typing on a computer paves the way for some of the top injuries (back and neck pains, vision strains, pain in the hands and wrists) to develop.

Other injuries occur from mistakes that could happen anywhere; objects left out to trip over, furniture that is not well-maintained, faulty electrical cords and even from the office, via poor ventilation, lighting and air quality itself.

As we continue to work increasingly long work weeks and much of them spent inside an office environment, knowing how to avoid these top office injuries is now a necessity.

1. The Most Common Accident: Falls

Falling down is not only the most common office accident, it is also responsible for causing the most disabling injuries according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

In fact, office workers are 2 to 2.5 times more likely to suffer a disabling injury from a fall than non-office workers. The most common causes of office falls, according to the CDC, include:

- Tripping over an open desk or file drawer, electrical cords or wires, loose carpeting, or objects in hallways/walkways.
- Bending or reaching for something while seated in an unstable chair.
- Using a chair in place of a ladder.
- Slipping on wet floors.
- Inadequate lighting.

How to Avoid Falls in the Office: The good news is that falls are preventable. Following these tips should help.

- Look before you walk -- make sure the walkway is clear.
- If you're done with a drawer, close it immediately.
- Don't stretch to reach something while seated. Get up instead.
- Report any loose carpeting, electrical cords, etc. to someone who can have them fixed.
- Help keep the office fall-proof. This means cleaning up spills from the floor (even if you didn't spill it), picking up objects that are out of place, etc.
- Use a stepladder, not a chair, if you need to reach something overhead.

2. Be Wary While Lifting

Lifting even small loads (stacks of files, computer paper, a computer monitor, etc.) can lead to injury if done improperly. Your back, neck and shoulders are all susceptible to this type of injury. Before you decide to lift anything, be sure it is not too heavy for you (if it is, ask a co-worker or supervisor to help).

Safe Lifting Tips: Whenever you need to lift something, follow these tips to reduce your risk of injury.

- Lift by squatting toward the floor (when lifting something from the floor) and then using your legs (not your back) to straighten up.
- Allow your back to stay in a straight position.
- Pick up the object with your entire hand (not just your fingers) and hold the load close to your body. Refrain from twisting.
- To set something down, again use your legs for strength, not your back.

3. **Be Careful of Flying and Stationary Objects**

According to the CDC, office workers are often struck by objects, bump into objects themselves, or get caught in or between objects, and as a result, are injured.

A properly positioned workstation, in which your elbow is at 90 degrees and your computer monitor is at eye level, will reduce your risk of musculoskeletal problems.

This includes bumping into desks, other people, file cabinets, copy machines, etc., and getting hit by objects that fall from cabinets tops, items dropped on feet, doors opening unexpectedly or cabinets that fall over if not properly balanced.

Meanwhile, office workers get their fingers caught in drawers, windows and paper cutters, and their hair and jewelry caught in office machines.

Avoid Getting Hurt by Objects in the Office: You can avoid these types of injuries, first and foremost, by staying alert, watching where you are walking and placing your fingers, keeping jewelry and hair away from machinery and concentrating on what you're doing. Meanwhile, open doors slowly in case someone is walking by.

You can also ask your office manager to purchase proper storage devices so all materials can be safely stored out of the way, and to ensure that office machines have the proper safety guards attached.



4. **4. Get the Proper Workstation Ergonomics**

Over time, using a workstation that does not fit your body (i.e. your chair does not support your back, your computer screen is too high or low, your wrists are at an uncomfortable angle while typing, etc.) can result in musculoskeletal problems of your neck, shoulders and back, poor posture, eyestrain and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Along with setting up your workstation properly, it's essential to take breaks and change your position (whether seated or standing) frequently. For instance, look away from your computer screen for 30 seconds every 10 minutes, and get up to stretch every half hour. This will help to take some of the strain away and reduce your risk of being injured from making repetitive movements (such as typing) without a rest.

[How to Set up an Ergonomically Correct Workstation:](#) You can use these basic guidelines to improve your workstation right now.

- Adjust your chair so that your thighs are horizontal with the floor, your feet are flat, and the backrest supports your lower back. If your feet do not rest comfortably on the floor, use a footrest.
- Adjust your keyboard or chair height so that, while you're typing, your elbows are at a 90-degree angle and your wrists are straight.
- Adjust your computer monitor so that the top of the screen is at your eye level.
- Use a document holder so your papers can be kept at the same level as your computer monitor.
- Make motions such as typing and stapling with the least amount of force possible.
- Adjust the window blinds or lighting so there is no glare on the computer screen.