

# TOOL BOX TALKS

## Preventing Shoulder Injuries

The shoulder is basically a ball-and-socket joint that is relatively unstable and easily injured. Called the rotator cuff, it degenerates with age and after an injury, and must be cared for throughout your life. The rotator cuff is comprised of four muscles – the supraspinatus, subscapularis, infraspinatus and teres minor. The four muscles attach at different points on the scapula (shoulder blade) and enable the shoulder to internally and externally rotate.

### WORKSAFE TIPS

#### SHOULDER FACTS

- The shoulder has the greatest range of motion of any joint in the body.
  - HOWEVER – it is this ability to move that makes the shoulder vulnerable to injury!
- The shoulder can assume 1,600 positions!
- The shoulder is surrounded by four muscles and their tendons:
  - Supraspinatus
  - Subscapularis
  - Infraspinatus
  - Teres minor
- Together, these muscles and their tendons are called the rotator cuff.

#### SHOULDER INJURIES AND PROBLEMS

- Strains
- Separations
- Overhead work can lead to **tendinitis**.
- The **bursa**, or empty sac that surrounds the rotator cuff, can be squeezed, called bursitis.
- Aging causes rotator cuff **degeneration** and **weakening**.
- **Rotator cuff tears** are a result of shoulder injury.

#### USE R.I.C.E. FOR A SHOULDER INJURY:

**R:** Rest

**I:** Ice

**C:** Compression

**E:** Elevation

See a physician to determine the extent of a shoulder injury and whether or not more treatment is needed!

#### COMMON CAUSES OF SHOULDER INJURY:

- Hard repetitive use
- Repetitive overhead reaching or lifting
- Repetitive overhead heavy lifting
- Falling on an outstretched arm
- Pulling or “yanking” on an object
- “Yanking” a starter cord on an engine
- Blow to the top of the shoulder

#### SHOULDER HEALTH

- Exercise regularly to strengthen the muscles around the shoulder joint.
- Good upper body strengthening and flexibility can reduce the risk of shoulder injury.
- Good cardiovascular health also helps prevent injuries that occur as a result of fatigue.
- The stronger and more flexible the joints are, the more readily they will be able to withstand impact or repetitive forces.

#### SAFETY

- Follow instructions with respect to proper lifting techniques and other safe work practices designed to prevent shoulder injuries.
- Avoid throwing or tossing objects.
- Use care when positioning the body and back before even mild exertion during lifting.
- Face the object to be lifted, and keep the back as straight as possible by bending and using legs for lifting power.
- Do not reach to place or retrieve heavy objects stored up high; use a stable platform / step stool.
- Know when you need rest and relaxation during non-working hours and maintain good physical condition to avoid strains and sprains.



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