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Attention News Editors:

"Back Pain: Don't take it lying down"

Take an active role in your recovery

EDMONTON, May 2 /CNW/ - Years ago, sufferers of back pain were often told to lie in bed and get lots of rest. Today, we know better. Health care professionals believe that being active is the key to getting better faster.

"Like most physicians, I see many individuals with back pain," says Dr. David Reid, director of the Glen Sather Sports Medicine Clinic. "Activity is the key to a healthy and safe recovery."

In 2004, claims for back pain made up more than 26 per cent of all lost-time claims reported to WCB-Alberta. That equates to almost 9,000 lost-time claims in 2004, costing almost \$14 million.

"Our award winning safety program is designed to encourage our employees to follow safe work practices and avoid exposure to risks. We incorporate back care education into our tool box sessions on an ongoing basis," says Melony Erickson, director of safety, Alberta Oil Tool. "If one of our staff experiences back pain we ensure they get the appropriate care for their personal situation, including modified work if applicable. More importantly, we encourage them to stay active, both at work and outside the work environment."

Even when your back is painful, you can participate in low-impact exercise without strain (walking, swimming, riding an exercise bike, dancing or yoga). Ultimately the success of any treatment depends on the patients' willingness to take an active role in their recovery.

"Back pain is experienced by more than 80 percent of adults, however the more serious conditions are less common," adds Reid. "In fact, most individuals - if they stay active - can expect recovery in two to six weeks."

As partners, Human Resources and Employment - Workplace Health and Safety, Alberta Construction Safety Association, Alberta Hotel Safety Association, Manufacturers' Health and Safety Association and WCB-Alberta have kick-started the Back Education Project. Keep your eyes and ears open for more information on how to beat back pain. The campaign seeks to inform Albertans through television, radio, and posters and advises them to not take back pain lying down!

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) - Alberta is a not-for-profit corporation legislated to administer the workers' compensation system for the province. Through the payment of premiums, 106,000 employers fund this no-fault system that provides compensation for workplace injuries and occupational diseases to 1.4 million workers.

Background Sheet

Back Pain - Don't Take it Lying Down
Awareness Campaign 2005

The facts:

- Back pain is common, but did you know that serious damage is rare? More than 80 per cent of adults will experience some sort of back pain during their lives.
- If you experience back pain, resting - for a day or more - may actually prolong pain and recovery. Your back is designed for movement. The sooner you get moving, and back to regular activities, the sooner you will feel better.
- Having good posture, taking care when lifting, and maintaining a good fitness level can prevent most back pain.

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- The reality is, people with back pain can often perform light tasks and can even go back to work or modified work duties soon after an injury.

Common questions:

Q: How many lost-time claims does the WCB handle each year?

A: In 2004, claims for back pain made up more than 26 per cent of all lost-time claims reported to the WCB-Alberta. That equates to almost 9,000 lost-time claims in 2004. The cost of these claims almost \$14 million.

Q: Is back pain common?

A: Back pain is experienced by more than 80 per cent of adults, however serious injury is uncommon. Even when your back is painful, you can participate in low-impact exercise without strain (walking, swimming, riding an exercise bike, dancing or yoga).

Q: How do I recover from a back injury?

A: Years ago, sufferers of back pain were told to lie in bed and get lots of rest. Today most health care professionals believe that being active is the key to getting better faster.

Q: Who is the target audience for the campaign?

A: Based on statistical data gathered on whom injures their backs at work (by gender and occupation) the primary target audience for the campaign was selected as follows:

- Working Albertans aged 19 to 50
- Males in industries - manufacturing, retail/sales and service, trucking and transportation; and
- Females in the industries - health care and retail/sales and service

Q: Do x-rays or MRI scans detect what is happening with my back?

A: X-rays and MRI scans can detect serious spinal injuries, but they don't usually help in ordinary back pain. They may even be misleading. Doctors sometimes mention 'degeneration' which sounds frightening, but it's not damage or arthritis. These are normal changes with age - just like grey hair.

For further information: Media Contact: Jill Lindstrand, Communications Advisor, Phone: (780) 498-7420, Fax: (780) 498-7875

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD - ALBERTA - More on this organization



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