

SAFETY FOCUSED

Presented by

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Treating Pain Without Opioids

Although opioids are an effective treatment for short-term pain management, their highly addictive nature has led to widespread misuse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that over 115 people die from opioid overdoses every day, making the ongoing epidemic one of the most dangerous health issues in decades.

Research from the American College of Physicians (ACP) has found that alternative, noninvasive and therapy-based pain treatments can be more effective than opioid use, without the risk of addiction. And, while the guidelines do recommend the use of opioids and other medications as a last resort, therapeutic treatments can help strengthen and heal the body naturally.

Here are some of the ACP's recommendations for treating pain:

- **Use heat or ice packs to reduce pain and swelling**—Regulating how much blood flows into affected areas can be a simple and effective way to reduce pain.
- **Exercise when possible**—Although exercising to relieve pain may sound strange, even low-intensity activity like stretching or walking can help strengthen your muscles and relieve pain. Consult with a health care or fitness professional to customize a safe and effective exercise routine for any severe or chronic pain.
- **Avoid overexertion**—Rest will allow any injured tissue and nerve roots to heal. However, too much rest can cause your muscles to weaken.
- **Engage in relaxing activities such as yoga and meditation**—Research has shown that the mental aspect of physical pain can cause it to be much more intense than it would be otherwise.
- **Explore your options**—Talk with your doctor about alternative pain relievers and anti-inflammatory medications. You could also discuss when to use or how to wean off strong narcotics. Opioids should only be considered as a last resort.

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Preventing Sprains and Strains

Sprains, strains and tears to muscles and connective tissues are some of the most common injuries that employees experience. These injuries can come from a number of common activities, such as lifting something heavy, being hit by falling objects or even a simple misstep. Overusing your muscles can also cause these injuries over time.

To reduce your risk of experiencing sprains and strains on the job, keep these tips in mind:

- Use extreme caution if you are lifting something particularly heavy. When in doubt, ask for help moving the object.
- Reduce repetitive movements if possible. Chronic strains are usually the result of overusing the same muscles.
- Use proper form when completing tasks, as over gripping can increase the risk of hand and forearm strains.
- Consider your posture when sitting for long periods of time, and maintain an overall relaxed position.
- Maintain a healthy fitness level outside of work to keep your body strong and flexible.
- Avoid slippery surfaces, and use harnesses and nets if working at heights above ground level.
- Wear proper footwear, gloves and other protective equipment to avoid sprains and strains.
- Stretch before you begin working, and take short breaks throughout the day to stretch and rebalance your body.

If you have any questions or concerns about sprains or strains, do not hesitate to contact your supervisor.



According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, sprains and strains account for **nearly 40%** of all nonfatal work injuries.

