

Hard work is required to accomplish many jobs on the farm, and often it starts to take a toll on a farmer's body.

Farming is very physical work. The result of lifting, stretching, and straining could lead to pains in the shoulders, arms, back, legs, and even disabling conditions. Sprains and strains can happen if the body is not used correctly. By starting at an early age, when youth begin doing heavy lifting, they can be healthier adult workers.

Ergonomics is the study of the demands made on the body as a result of work. These studies help determine what to do to prevent damage to the body from doing work in a dangerous way. Some of these physical stresses include forceful gripping, lifting, bending, twisting, kneeling, squatting, and vibrating equipment.

Manual lifting of heavy objects causes the most low back pain, which is a common complaint among workers. Farm workers must do this type of activity often when they are moving sacks of feed, throwing hay bales, or moving equipment from one location to another.

Youth are often involved with this type of activity and find themselves in situations where they could be hurt by lifting excessive weight.

So what puts people at risk? Lifting objects heavier than 25 pounds. Or in the case of a child or youth, lifting items over 10 to 15 percent of their body weight. Other factors include:

- ▶ Repeated lifting
- ▶ Awkward body posture
- ▶ Prolonged activity like driving
- ▶ Slips and falls

Prevent damage to the body by:

- ▶ Designing the job to reduce injury
- ▶ Keep reach to a minimum, lifting as close to the body as possible
- ▶ Lift with your legs, not your back
- ▶ Stay in shape
- ▶ Ask for help if the load is too heavy
- ▶ Alternate lifting jobs with other tasks
- ▶ Use mechanical assistance when possible

Your back has to last you a lifetime. Treat it well, and teach your kids to do the same from the very beginning.