



Avoid Back Injuries by Learning Safe Lifting Techniques

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year. In many cases, these injuries could have been prevented if the workers learned and practiced the proper lifting of heavy objects.

Learning safe methods of lifting and handling heavy objects can protect against injury and make work labor easier. While these methods may take a little while to get used to, over time, safe lifting practices will become second nature.

Guidelines for Safe Lifting

- Ask yourself the following questions before you attempt to lift an object:
- Can I safely lift this object by myself?
- Is the load too awkward or too large to handle alone?
- Does the load have good grips or handles?
- Is there anything present to obstruct proper lifting?
- Might the contents of the load shift while being lifted?
- Is there enough space in the work area for easy movement?
- Practice the following heavy lifting techniques to protect yourself from injury:
- Place your feet at least shoulder width apart to maintain good balance. Keep your feet firmly planted, and try to distribute weight evenly throughout the soles of both feet.
- Utilize your abdominal muscles. You will reduce

stress and strain on your back by tightening abdominal muscles before starting the lift.



- Bend from your knees. This will ensure that weight comes into the thighs and hips first, rather than the spine. Never lift with your

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knees locked because the hamstrings will tighten and lock the pelvis into an unbalanced position. Never bend from the waist. This improper practice puts tremendous pressure on the back. During the lift, keep your back straight, but not vertical.

- Tuck in your chin. Tucking your chin will help keep your back straight.
- Grip with your palms, not with your fingers. You are less likely to drop an object by gripping with your palms, as opposed to gripping with only the fingers.
- To start the load moving, use your body weight, and then lift by pushing up with the legs. By using your legs, you will fully utilize the strongest muscles in your body.
- To avoid strain on your upper back, keep the arms and elbows close to the body while lifting.
- Keep the load close to your body. Use your feet to change direction.

- Make sure you can see where you are going!
- To lower the object, bend the knees. Never stoop. Place the load on a shelf or bench and push it into position. Make certain your hands and feet are clear when placing the load.
- Make a point to practice the above steps when lifting anything, even a relatively light object.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. If the weight, size, or shape of an object is too much for one person, don't take the risk. Instead, ask for assistance from one of your co-workers. Ideally, workers should be approximately the same size for team lifting. Designate one lifter to be responsible for control of the action to ensure proper coordination. If efforts are not coordinated among lifters, the risk of injury can increase.



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