

# Proper lifting techniques to help workers avoid injury.



Without the right ergonomic training, lifting can often lead to back injuries.

On-the-job lifting is a routine practice for people in many industries, yet workers often get hurt when it's not done properly. In fact, back disorders are a leading cause of disability in the U.S., afflicting nearly 600,000 employees each year at a cost of about \$50 billion.<sup>1</sup> Safe lifting is always important—even with small objects. It doesn't take a heavy load to cause a strain that can result in a worker requiring time off.

## What's the risk to your business?

Without the right ergonomic training, lifting can lead to back injuries and the negative consequences that often come with them. These include workers' compensation claims, lost production time, costs to replace injured workers, plus the danger of injured employees developing long-term conditions. By sharing the following lifting safety tips with your staff, you can help them avoid painful and costly injuries.

## How to prepare before you lift.

You can't always avoid lifting on the job, but you should carefully evaluate any object before trying to lift it. Here's what you can do:

- Size up the object to determine if weight and size will affect how it should be lifted
- Be sure you can lift, carry and place the item where it belongs
- Clear the path from the object to where it will be placed
- Check the material for nails, splinters and other hazards
- Wear gloves and safety shoes, if appropriate
- Ask for help If the object is too heavy or bulky, or if you can't see around what you're attempting to carry

## Things to remember while lifting and transporting.

- Avoid lifting from the floor, if possible; lifting from the floor more than doubles the amount of force on your lower back when compared with lifting from waist height
- Get a firm footing; keep your feet shoulder-width apart with one foot in front of the other for good balance



<sup>1</sup> OSHA Technical Manual—Back Disorders and Injuries, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, [https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/otm\\_vii/otm\\_vii\\_1.html#1](https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/otm_vii/otm_vii_1.html#1) (downloaded 5/4/16)

## Lifting Safety

- Grip firmly with your whole hand, not just your fingers
- Keep the load close; your back muscles must work harder to counter-balance an object's weight when it's farther away from your body
- Squat down, bending at the hips and knees
- Keep your back in its neutral or straight position; your back should be straight, but not rigid
- Tighten stomach muscles to help keep your back in balance
- Lift up objects primarily by straightening your legs and slightly unbending your back
- Stand slowly, without jerking upward
- Change direction only with your feet; don't twist your body
- Watch your fingers, hands and feet in tight places
- Place the load at a location that is waist high to avoid bending; when placing on a shelf, set it on the front of the shelf and push it into place

**Additional tips when moving large objects.**

- Whenever possible, use a cart, hand truck or other mechanical device instead of lifting on your own, especially when the object you're moving is large
- When you move large items manually, reduce the strain on your back by pushing them
  - Keep one foot behind the other and your weight balanced between them, and keep your back straight and vertical to the ground
  - To maintain this position more easily, keep your head up and look straight ahead
  - Use the force of your legs and arms to assist you
- Do not attempt to drag an object behind you, which can strain your shoulders and neck, as well as your back



Lifting from the floor should be avoided, if possible. However, when necessary, the worker picking up the object should always squat down, bending at the hips and knees.

Providing solutions  
to help our members  
manage risk.<sup>SM</sup>



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