

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Avoid Back Injury
- Guidelines for Safe Lifting
- Eight Steps to Safe Lifting
- Muscle Injury
- Disc Injury
- Joint Injury
- Controls
- Three Rules to Avoid Back Injury

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Hats ON for Safety

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Oh, My Aching Back!

Preventing back injuries is a major workplace safety challenge. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses. Though lifting, placing, carrying, holding and lowering are involved in manual materials handling, the survey shows that four out of five of these injuries were to the lower back, and that three out of four occurred while the employee was lifting.



Eight Steps to Safe Lifting

1. Keep a wide stance and solid footing
2. Bend at the hips and knees to a squatting position, keeping the
3. Tighten stomach muscles.
4. Get a good grasp on the load
5. "Hug" the load close to your body
6. Lift steadily with legs
7. Point feet in the direction of movement
8. Set the load down—remember to maintain your spine's natural curve.

Avoid Back Injury with the Right Lifting Techniques

Many people believe they know how to lift properly and safely. They are in disbelief when they injure their back during a "simple" lift. After getting a back injury from lifting, many people will comment, "but I even bent my knees!" Therefore, there must be more to safe lifting than just bending the knees.

Guidelines for Safe Lifting Keep your back pain free by following these important guidelines:

► Plan Ahead.

► Gently stretch your muscles to warm up.

► Use dollies or other mechanical equipment when possible.

► Lift or carry only what you can handle safely.

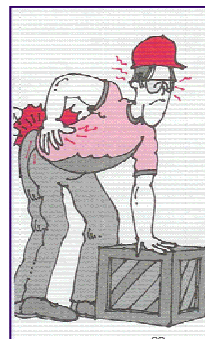
► Lift with your legs, not your back.

► Never twist.

► Carry the load close to your body to reduce the strain.

► Lower loads slowly, bending knees.

► Work as a team for oversized loads.



Muscle Injury

Getting out of position during lifting can put a great deal of stress on the lower back and when the demand is too high on a muscle it can be injured. Tiny tears in a muscle, known as a muscle strain, can happen. (a common form of back injury) This can be very painful and take a long time to heal.

Disc Injury

The intervertebral discs act like ball bearings and cushions between the vertebrae (bones) in the spine. These fibrous rings can bulge, break open or rupture when injured.

Joint Injury

There are many joints where bones meet bones in the back. Improper lifting may irritate the joints or cause them to become "locked."

Suggested Administrative Controls

Train employees to utilize techniques that place minimum stress on the lower back. Physical conditioning or stretching programs to reduce the risk of muscle strain.



Suggested Engineering Controls

Reduce the size or weight of the object to be lifted. Adjust the height of a pallet or shelf. Lifting which occurs below the knee or above the shoulder is more strenuous than lifting between these lines. Install mechanical aids such as pneumatic lifts, conveyors, and/or automated materials handling equipment.

What are *YOU* worried about? Help us out by letting us know about safety topics that could help keep your workplace safe!

Three Rules to Avoid Back Injury

- Keep the Chest Forward.
Bend the hips and push the chest out, pointing forward.
Never twist.



- Lead with the hips, not the shoulders.
Twisting is another dangerous mistake, The shoulders should be kept in line with the hips to avoid twisting. For changing directions, move the hips first so the shoulders will move in unison. When moving the



shoulders first, the hips tend to lag behind creating the dangerous twisting that can cause back injury.

- Keep the weight close to the body. The further an object is held from one's center of gravity, the more force required to hold that object. For example, for most people it is not too difficult to hold a gallon of milk close to the chest, but it can be difficult to hold a gallon of milk stretched out in front at arm's reach. Of course, the milk doesn't get heavier, it just requires more force to hold it up. This extra force will also



run through the lower back. Therefore the closer the object is to one's body, the less likely it is to lead to back injury.

- If the object is too wide to get it between the knees when lifting, consider getting help from another person instead of trying to lift it alone. Larger objects require lifting at a long reach and increase the load on the back.

Some information in this newsletter was taken from spine-health.com; des.umd.edu/compliance/factsheet/back; BLR Pocket Guide Workplace