

Toolbox Talks

Back Injury Prevention

Lifting, moving and carrying are required for many job tasks. Back injuries and muscle strains often result from cumulative trauma due repetitive use of poor lifting techniques. That is why it is important to use safe lifting and materials handling techniques.

Practice the following safe lifting techniques:

- Get a sense how heavy the object is by lifting one corner or side. Try moving the object by pushing it with one foot. If you cannot move it, you should ask for help in moving the object.
- Make sure there's room to lift the object without twisting or turning. Identify the most direct route to where you are taking the load and putting it down. Consider obstacles, wet/slippery or uneven surfaces, doorways or stairs, and any equipment or vehicular traffic you may encounter.
- Stand with your legs about shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly in front of the other, and make sure you have good, secure footing.
- Bend at the knees and get a good grip. Heels should be slightly off the floor; you should be as close as possible to the object. Palms should be against the object—don't use fingertips. Make sure they are on securely and you have a firm grip on the object.
- Lift slowly using your leg muscles while keeping your back straight. Do not bend, twist or turn at the waist. Your leg muscles should do the work. When starting the lift, tense your stomach and buttocks muscles, keep your head and neck straight.
- Keep the load close to your body; that places less stress on your back.
- If you have to change direction while carrying the load, pivot your feet instead of twisting at the waist. Keep your body straight and in-line with the load you are carrying.
- If you feel any pain when trying to lift an item, put it down immediately!



Other Tips:

- If possible, avoid lifting items from the floor. Leaning forward to lift from floor level doubles the force on your lower back compared to lifting an item from waist level.
- Store heavy items on shelving between knee and shoulder height. Don't store items on floor in front of shelving. This makes it difficult to start a lift with the load close to the body.
- When using a wheeled cart or dolly, push the load, don't pull. Pushing uses the legs and is less stressful on the back.
- Use equipment and tools to accomplish the lift whenever possible. Remember: NO LIFT - NO INJURY!

