



Safe Lifting

HOW LIFTING CAN INJURE YOUR BACK

When you lift, your back is put under stress.

- Twisting or jerking while lifting and carrying can injure the small facet joints that guide movement of the back.
- The discs that separate the vertebrae (bones) and the ligaments that hold them together are also at risk. Discs are composed of a jelly-like core, surrounded by a strong fibrous ring. With repeated unsafe lifting, the fibrous ring or its supporting ligaments may tear or rupture.
- Lifting while bent forward will increase the stress on your spine. Contributing to this stress are factors like the weight of the load, how far it is held from your body, how often and how fast you lift and how long you hold the load.
- Back injuries are most likely when the spine is bent forward and twisted at the same time.



TIPS FOR BETTER LIFTING

- Test the load. Before you lift, check the weight and make sure you can lift it safely. If not get help or use an assistive device.
- Keep your back in its natural curve. Bend at the hips and/or knees. With the low back erect, the forces are distributed safely.
- Maintain a wide base of support. A solid and wide base will help reduce the possibility of slipping.
- Hold objects as close to you as possible. This reduces stress on the back.
- Do not twist when carrying. Move or change directions with the feet. This decreases the stress and load on the back.
- Tighten stomach muscles when lifting. This prepares the abdominal area to help in the lift and reduce strain on the low back.
- Think before you lift. First think how you will lift the object. Plan the path and make sure it is clear.
- Eliminate repetitive lifting duties if possible. Place things or supplies that you constantly need or use at a better initial height to decrease lifting activities.
- Use equipment. Wherever possible, lift or carry heavy items with a crane, hoist or forklift. Instead of carrying parcels, use a hand trolley.
- Lift with the legs or the large muscles. Using the large muscle groups helps to diminish the forces on the low back.
- Maintain good communication if two or more people are involved. Good timing on a lift reduces the likelihood of jerky or sudden unexpected movements.
- Move obstacles out of the way. Making sure the path is clear (clearing away toys, tools, loose rugs, etc.) decreases the risk of slipping or falling.
- Push rather than pull. It is easier to utilize your weight advantage when pushing.