

Lifting Techniques

Back injury is the leading lost work time injury in industry. Eight out of ten persons in the United States will consult a physician for back problems sometime in their lives. About 400,000 people suffer disabling back injuries each year. Experience has shown that prevention programs can significantly reduce the incidence of back injury. However, there is no cookbook formula that will solve all lifting problems.

Lifting objects that are too heavy is a problem in some jobs, but 90 percent of back injuries due to lifting occur while lifting light objects. Many back problems can be prevented or cured with exercise, weight control, and proper use of the back. The stresses placed on the back during manual lifting are due to a combination of the weight of the object being lifted and the lifting technique.

Avoid lifting where possible and practical by pushing, pulling, rolling or sliding the object to be moved. Use mechanical aids (hand trucks, carts, winches, forklifts, etc.) or request help from other employees when necessary, particularly when you find yourself in a difficult or awkward lifting situation.

When lifting heavy objects from the floor/ground can't be avoided, here are some basic principles to prevent back pain and injury:

- Lift only loads you can safely handle.
- Establish good footing.
- Keep the load close to the body.
- Bend at the knees as you grasp it.
- Get a full handgrip and keep your body erect.
- Lift smoothly by straightening the legs (avoid jerky or snatching lifts).
- Avoid the lift and twist action. When turning, shift the position of your feet rather than twisting your body at the waist.
- Reverse the procedure to set the object down.
- Wear protective belt at all times when lifting heavy loads.

REMEMBER, the secret to proper lifting is to bend your knees, not your back, and let your powerful leg muscles do most of the work.

REMEMBER, a failure to follow safety procedures properly or to pay attention to workplace safety could result in injury to you and your fellow workers.