How Much Can I Lift?

Is there a law about the maximum weight you can lift safely?
There is no specific law regarding the maximum weight a worker can lift. Restricting loads to a particular weight does not guarantee safety. You might injure yourself by reaching awkwardly to pick up a very light load or by slipping and losing your balance while handling a modest load.

Why not?
It’s difficult to develop specific lifting requirements based only on weight. Other workplace and personal factors can contribute to injury. They include:

- the distance between the object being lifted and the front of your body
- the number of lifts you repeatedly perform
- the length of time during which you perform repeated lifts
- the size, shape and texture of the object you are lifting
- the distance you carry the object
- the height from which you lift the object (starting height)
- the height to which you lift the object (finishing height)
- whether or not the object has handholds
- the extent to which you twist your body
- your age, health, skill, stamina and fitness level
What can you do to prevent injury?

(1) Try to reduce the weight and size of the object you are lifting.
(2) Keep objects you lift as close to your body as possible.
(3) Try to have lifts begin at knee level but go no higher than shoulder level.
(4) Avoid rotating or twisting movements when lifting or lowering a load.
(5) Avoid awkward postures.
(6) Make sure your stance is comfortable and solid.
(7) Lift loads smoothly.
(8) Pace your work.
(9) Report symptoms early.

What can your employer do?

(1) Reduce or eliminate heavy and repetitive lifting.
(2) Reduce the weight and size of the object to be lifted.
(3) Replace lifting and lowering by pushing and pulling.
(4) Provide lifting equipment such as carts, dollies, jib cranes, scissor lifts, etc.
(5) Reduce the distance that objects must be carried.
(6) Provide workers with adequate clearance and headroom in their work areas.
(7) Rotate workers among tasks which do not include lifting.
(8) Reduce the distance between the worker and object(s) being lifted.
(9) Suit lifting tasks to the worker’s capabilities.
(10) Keep track of symptoms and injuries
(11) Have an ergonomic assessment done of the job and work area.