

Taking Care Of Your Back - Proper Lifting Techniques

Acknowledgements: Lab Safety Supply, www.labsafety.com
University of Wisconsin at La Crosse EH&S Program

More than 1 million workers suffer back injuries every year – 8 out of 10 will likely have a back injury at some time in their life. A leading cause of back injury is improper lifting techniques. Please review these instructions for safe lifting techniques:



1. Stand close to the load with your feet spread apart about shoulder width, with one foot slightly in front of the other for balance.



2. Squat down bending at the knees (not your waist). Tuck your chin while keeping your back as vertical as possible.



3. Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift.



4. Begin slowly lifting with your LEGS by straightening them. Never twist your body during this step. If you must turn while carrying the load, turn using your FEET and not your torso.



5. Once the lift is complete, keep the object as close to the body as possible. As the load's center of gravity moves away from the body, there is a dramatic increase in stress to the lumbar region of the back.

Another suggestion for maintaining a healthy back is to get regular exercise, which includes physical conditioning or stretching programs to reduce the risk of muscle strain. Also, good posture helps reduce the stress of sitting in one position for prolonged periods. Finally, if you work in an office, adjust your chair so that your arms are at or slightly below desk level and your feet are flat on the floor. If your feet don't touch the floor, use a footrest.