

Safe Lifting

GOAL

To increase awareness of safe lifting techniques and to prevent back or other injuries.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Know the hazards of improper lifting
- Understand how you can protect your back
- Prevent back injuries

WHAT ARE THE HAZARDS OF IMPROPER LIFTING?

Lifting heavy items is one of the leading causes of injury in the workplace. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shoulder and back injuries account for over 38% of injuries involving missed workdays. Bending and twisting were commonly cited movements that caused back injuries. Strains and sprains from lifting loads that are either too large or too heavy are common hazards associated with manually moving materials.



If you aren't aware of or do not practice proper lifting techniques, you could injure yourself and suffer the consequences of potential back injuries. Having a back injury can have devastating effects on your quality of life and ability to work which is why it's so important for us to protect our backs by working safely.

Some general causes of back injuries include:

- ❖ Poor Posture
- ❖ Slipping or falling
- ❖ Bending or twisting at the waist
- ❖ Heavy Lifting
- ❖ Reaching and Lifting
- ❖ Improper lifting techniques



Quick Check

1. What are commonly cited movements that cause back injuries?
2. What could happen if you aren't aware of or do not practice proper lifting techniques?

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOUR BACK?

WARM UP AND STRETCH REGULARLY. One thing you can do to protect yourself is to always warm up your back and legs before the start of your shift. Warming up and stretching to stay flexible helps to promote good joint function and range of motion. This improves performance and reduces your overall risk of injury. Here are a couple stretches to help you warm up before your shift.

LOWER BACK ROTATION STRETCH

Stand with hands on hips. Stabilizing the hips and legs, **gently** roll your upper body forward, right, backward, and left to stretch your lower back. Do 5 **slow** circles gradually expanding the circle each time. Repeat in the opposite direction.



HAMSTRING & ACHILLES STRETCH

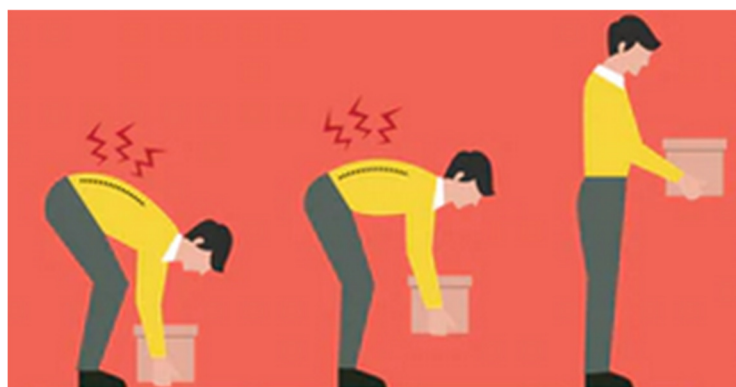
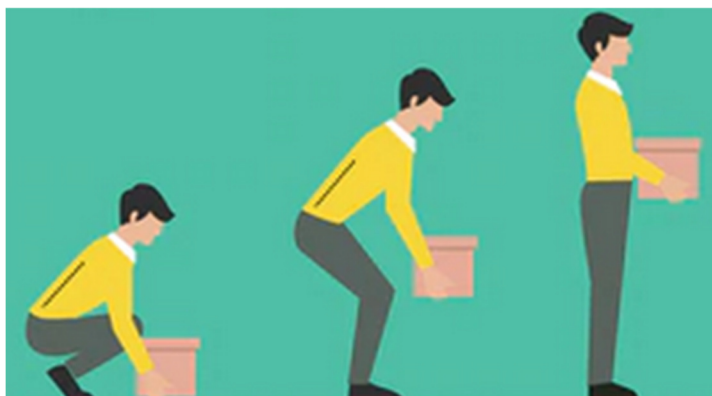
Position your body with one leg forward and the toes of that foot raised up. Keep your back straight and bend forward **slowly** at the waist. You should feel a stretch in the back of your thigh and knee. Then shift your weight onto your forward leg and bend your knee. Keep the back leg straight and heel on the floor. Hold each stretch for 20 seconds. Perform each stretch 2 times for each leg.



HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOUR BACK (CONTINUED)

USE PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUES

- 1** **SIZE UP THE LOAD.** Check for exposed staples or other hazards. Test the weight by moving it with your foot. If you can't move it with your foot, you'll probably need to ask for help. Check your path of travel.
- 2** **GET CLOSE TO THE LOAD.** Bring the load as close to you as possible before lifting. Move so close to the load that you feel as though you're "hugging" the load. This puts less strain on your back. Bend at your knees. Keep your head up and back straight.
- 3** **TIGHTEN YOUR MUSCLES.** As you begin the lift, tighten your stomach muscles, but **don't forget to breathe.** Keep your head and shoulders up. Tightening up can work like a brace for our back, holding it in its proper position.
- 4** **LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS.** Lift gradually with your legs. You may feel tightening in your legs, but that's good; it means your legs are working hard instead of your back which reduces the chance of lower back injuries.
- 5** **PIVOT, DON'T TWIST!** Your back was not built for twisting. To pivot, turn your feet in the same direction as your body. This will prevent any twisting at the waist.



Do...

- ✓ Know or test the object weight
- ✓ Use ergonomic lift assists when possible
- ✓ Plan the lift and clear your path
- ✓ Ask for help with heavy or awkward loads
- ✓ Use a wide stance
- ✓ Use your legs to lift, **NOT YOUR BACK**
- ✓ Pivot your feet to **avoid twisting.**

Don't...

- ✗ Don't hold your breath
- ✗ Don't bend or twist at the waist
- ✗ Don't use a partial grip (1-2 fingers)
- ✗ Don't obstruct your vision when carrying
- ✗ Don't jerk or lift quickly
- ✗ Don't pinch your fingers or toes
- ✗ Don't pull a load if you can't push it



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THE TAKEAWAYS

If you remember nothing else about this training, at least remember the following.

1. Warming up reduces the risk of injuries.
2. When lifting, keep good posture. Lift with your legs, not your back.
3. Pivot, **don't twist**.
4. Always ask for help if a load is awkward or too heavy.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. **Back injuries can have devastating effects on your lifestyle and ability to work.**
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. **Warming up is a good way to help prevent back injuries.**
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. **Before you begin to lift a load, you should _____.**
 - A. Size up the load by trying to move it with your foot.
 - B. Just go right into lifting without checking how heavy it may be.
 - C. Bend at the waist to check how heavy it is.
4. **Some of the general causes of back injuries include:**
 - A. Poor posture, heavy lifting, and twisting
 - B. Reaching and lifting, slipping, bending
 - C. Improper lifting techniques
 - D. All of the above
5. **Some ways to prevent back injuries from occurring are:**
 - A. To pivot, don't twist
 - B. To hold your breath
 - C. To use your legs to lift, not your back
 - D. Both A and C. You should not be holding your breath when you're lifting, and you should never twist your body.
6. **Pivoting means turning on your feet to keep it aligned with your body.**
 - A. True. It is important to avoid twisting. Remember, it's one of the common cited movements in injuries.
 - B. False
7. **It's ok if my view is obstructed if I know where I'm going.**
 - A. True
 - B. False

Name: _____ Site: _____

Date: _____