



Back/Lifting Safety

Preventing back injuries is a major workplace safety challenge. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses. The following information should help you prevent back injuries

I. Stretch - Before Work and After Long Breaks

A. Upper Back

1. Stand with hands in front of thighs and palms facing body.
2. Lift hands toward chin while exhaling.
3. Do two sets of 12 with one minute rest between sets.

B. Middle Back

1. Stand erect and raise shoulders toward ears.
2. Hold position for a moment and slowly lower shoulders.
3. Do two sets of 12 with one minute rest between sets.

C. Lower Back

1. Get on hands and knees and allow back to sag.
2. Arch back upwards like a cat and bend head forward.
3. Hold position for a moment and slowly return to starting point.
4. Do two sets of 20 with one minute rest between sets.

II. Plan Before You Lift

A. Assess the load-weight, size, shape and bulk.

1. Determine if load exceeds your limitations.
2. Whenever possible ask co-workers for help, use a cart, hand truck, dolly or forklift.

B. Plan Route

1. Determine where item will be placed.
2. Check space for adequate room for arms.
3. Be aware of obstructions on both sides and above the new space.
4. Check path—remove tripping hazards and protect any openings.
5. Ensure that lighting is sufficient to see where you're going.
6. Stabilize uneven or loose ground.
7. *Remember: The shortest path isn't always the fastest and safest.*

III. Lifting Technique

A. Beginning to Lift

1. Face object squarely with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Be sure you have solid footing.

3. Make sure you have a firm grip that won't slip or become painful.
 4. Keep object as close as possible to your center of balance.
 5. Lift head and shoulders.
 6. Keep the natural curve in the back by keeping your bottom down and head up.
 7. Use strength of legs to slowly and smoothly push up.
 8. Move feet first to change direction.
 9. Don't twist your body.
- B. Lowering the load (reverse the procedure)
1. Bend knees and squat down.
 2. Keep head and shoulders up.
 3. Keep the natural curve in the back by keeping your bottom down and head up.
 4. Use strength of legs to lower slowly and smoothly.
 5. Stand up.
- C. When using mechanical help
1. Push, don't pull.
 2. Fasten load to equipment.
- D. *Remember: When in doubt, ask for help!*