

# **PRACTICE SAFE LIFTING AND SAVE YOUR BACK**

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Lifting is an important part of our job duties. While it is a required part of the job, we do not need to suffer injuries as a result. Back injuries can be very painful and can be difficult to heal. The vast majority of back injuries can be prevented. Back injuries are caused by a number of factors.

## **The following is a list of the most common:**

- Over exertion over a period of time
- Lifting more weight than you are physically capable of handling
- Lifting in an awkward position
- Lifting objects too far away from your body
- Twisting while lifting or carrying a heavy object
- Trying to lift objects too high into the air or trying to lift down objects from overhead
- Hurrying and not taking time to plan your lift
- Failure to maintain proper muscle tone and strength
- The natural aging process and the gradual reduction in physical capabilities that go along with it

## **The following items are important to keep in mind when you are preparing to lift:**

- Try to reduce the weight of the load if possible
- Get help to lift objects that are too heavy and cannot be lightened
- Think through the lifting process before actually lifting
- Take your time, don't hurry
- Try to lift only what you can handle comfortably
- Use your legs while lifting, not your back
- Don't bend over at the waist when picking up an object
- Avoid overhead lifting as much as possible
- Keep objects close to your body while lifting
- Never twist or jerk while lifting
- Use mechanical assistance whenever possible
- Do not try to reach over an object to lift another object
- Exercise and stay in good physical shape

## **Before lifting an object always remember:**

- A. Seek alternative methods if possible:
  - Lighten the load. Never attempt to lift a heavy object unnecessarily.
  - Use mechanical assistance such as a hoist, crane, lift truck, pallet jack or two wheel dolly.
  - Get help from others when you cannot lighten the load.
  - If items are stacked too high, use a ladder. Remove items one at a time.
- B. Size up the load and determine how heavy it is.
  - If the weight is unknown, review the type and size of the object.
  - Shake the object, if it moves easily you should be able to lift it.
- C. Inspect the object to be lifted for sharp edges, tears, or other problems which could cause an injury.
- D. Inspect the area around the object to be lifted. Do you have room to lift it safely? Is there a safe path to where you want to go? Is the floor free of slipping or tripping hazards? If not, make sure the area around the object to be lifted is cleared and/or cleaned up before lifting.

## **Know the proper steps of lifting:**

- Start by placing feet about shoulder distance apart, stand back from the object to be lifted (about six inches). Turn the box or object to be lifted to the left at a 45 degree angle to your body. This will allow you to get as close as possible and reduce the stress on your back.
- With feet should width apart, kneel down, putting your hand on the object to be lifted, to maintain balance.
- Slide up to the box. Place left foot alongside the left side of the box. Get as close to the box as possible. The inside corner of the box should be directly below your breast bone.
- Place your right hand under the right side of the box. Your right arm should be straight up and down. Make sure the box or object to be lifted, is balanced properly.
- Place your left hand on the left side of the box. Hand should be centered on the box to provide best balance.

- Lean forward, keep your back straight to keep spine in alignment. Do not bend over.
- Tuck chin in so it is in alignment with your neck and back. Take a deep breath and tighten stomach and abdominal muscles.
- Lift straight up with legs in a smooth steady lift. Do not jerk. Keep back straight and object close to your body.
- Pull object into your body as soon as you stand up. Get a good grip on the box with both hands. Be careful not to drop the box.
- Keep elbows in tight.
- Never twist your body while lifting or carrying an object. Always step, turn and pivot in direction of travel.
- Set the box, or object, down by bending your knees. Keep your spine in a straight alignment. If setting on a table, shelf or counter, set the box, or object, down on the edge, then slide into place.
- When picking up a box, or object, from a counter, shelf or table, slide the object as close to your body as possible. Bend your knees, then lift with your legs.
- Special caution is needed when lifting objects above shoulder level. Always tighten the load before trying to lift. Get as close to the object as possible. Set your feet should distance apart and gently lift the object down. If necessary, use the step stool or ladder.
- Do not reach over an object to lift another object or box. Lifting at arms length puts extreme pressure on the back.

Remember, always practice proper lifting habits. You can prevent a back injury if you follow proper lifting procedures all the time.