

An employee's guide

# Four points to safe lifting

As you know, lifting is a major contributing factor to workplace back injuries. The following techniques can help you avoid hurting your back. Keep in mind that you still have to use your discretion in applying them to your particular job.

It is important to avoid lifting if you can. Use assistive lifting equipment whenever available. Try pushing or rolling rather than lifting. If a manual lift is absolutely necessary, follow these four safe lifting techniques.

## Lifting techniques

**1. Keep your head up.** Looking forward is the best way to lift. It helps keep your back in a neutral position.

**2. Keep neutral curve in back.** In normal standing position, the adult spine has natural curvatures from front to back. When lifting or bending, try to maintain that position. Bend from the knees rather than the waist. When leaning over a counter, extend one leg straight behind. Remember to keep your head and shoulders up as you begin lifting.

**3. Bring the load in close.** Carry the load in the pit of your stomach instead of at arms' length or under one arm. This keeps your back from acting as sole support of the load and reduces the stress.

**4. Lift with your legs.** Then stand up in a smooth, even motion. Use the strength of your legs to straighten your knees and hips. This significantly decreases back stress.

You'll also want to avoid using sudden, rapid and wide movements. Let your muscles and your

discs have a chance to accommodate changes in shape and position.

- Stretch slowly before doing tasks, gradually increasing range and speed of movement.
- Avoid twisting by making sure your feet, knees and torso are pointed in the same direction when lifting.
- When unloading, gradually release the weight, and then straighten up slowly.

These lifting techniques are not fail proof, but they can reduce the strain on your back and help prevent injury.

Test your knowledge on back care by taking the fun quiz on the back side of this guide.



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## Test your safety knowledge

Don't cheat yourself 😊. First fold the page so you can't see the answers.  
Complete the quiz. Then unfold the page to see how you did.

Questions	Answers
1. The most common lost-time workplace injury is: a. Burns. b. Back injuries. c. Eye injuries.	b. Back injuries. Back injuries account for 29 lost workdays per 100 workers annually.
2. True or False. Most back injuries result from a lifting accident.	False. Back injuries result from the cumulative effect of the things we do. Incorrect standing or sitting posture, improper body mechanics and movements, staying in one position too long, being overweight or under prolonged physical stress, and not maintaining muscle strength and flexibility all add up over time and cause most back injuries.
3. True or False. It is a MISTAKE to lift with the back bent forward and the legs straight.	True. Lifting with your back bent forward and your legs straight places significant stress on the support structures of the lower back.
4. True or False. Employees should avoid lifting heavy objects if they can.	True. It is best to use assistive lifting equipment whenever available or to push or roll rather than lift. Of course, not all lifting can be avoided. Nonetheless, employees are less likely to injure their backs if they lift less frequently.
5. There are four key points to lifting safely. What are those four key points? a. Keep head up. Do not twist. Bring load close. Lift with arms. b. Avoid lifting if can. Keep back in neutral position. Tighten stomach muscles. Lift with legs. c. Keep head up. Keep neutral curve in back. Bring load in close. Lift with legs.	c. Keep head up. Keep neutral curve in back. Bring load in close. Lift with legs. Keeping your head up will help keep the neutral curve in your back. You will reduce the stress on your back by carrying the load close to you. That way your back doesn't have to act as sole support of the load. Using the strength of your legs to lift decreases back stress significantly. Remembering and practicing these four safe lifting techniques will help you reduce the chance of back injury.
6. True or False. Young workers are less likely to injure their backs on the job.	False. Young or old, all workers are susceptible to back injuries. Actually young workers oftentimes take more risks and injure themselves because of it.
7. If you hurt your back a little bit while working, you should: a. Tell your supervisor right away. b. Wait until tomorrow to see how it feels. c. Wait until it hurts more.	a. Tell your supervisor right away. It is best to inform your supervisor as soon as possible of any injury that happens at work even if it's small. All injuries have the potential to turn into serious problems. If you report a slight back strain immediately, your supervisor can make sure to restrict lifting or other tasks that may aggravate your back even more.
8. True or False. Office workers don't have to worry about back injuries.	False. Back injuries are caused by more than lifting. In fact, sitting too long at a desk can put intense strain on back ligaments and can cause serious problems. It is important for office workers to maintain good posture by adjusting the height of a chair and backrest and to arrange the workstation to minimize awkward stretching and movements. It is also a good idea to do regular stretches throughout the day.