

Safe Lifting

Back Safety

Back disorders are listed in the "top ten" leading workplace injuries published by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. They account for 27 percent of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses involving days away from work.

According to recent injury figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, musculoskeletal disorders involving the back accounted for 38.5 percent of all work-related musculoskeletal disorders (134,550 back cases out of 349,050 total cases). (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Over our lifetimes, 8 out of 10 people will experience a back injury and back pain. Most back injuries are painful and can be debilitating, and life changing.

What can Cause Back Pain

Improper lifting technique
 Picking up oversize loads
 Using back belts improperly
 Posture and poor alignment
 Awkward stretches while reaching
 Being in poor physical condition
 Static work postures

- **Prevention**

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Because your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand, and run, it's important to take care of it, so here are a few basic rules:

- Exercise to strengthen your back and reduce stress
- Lose excess weight
- Maintain good posture – all the time!

- **Some Tips**

Before you lift that box, or tool, or piece of equipment, take a moment to consider your action:

- Do you need to lift the item manually?
- How heavy is it?
- Is it packed correctly?
- Make sure the load is balanced
- Is it easy to reach the load?
- Where are you moving the item from?
- Where does it have to go?
- What route do you have to follow?
- Make sure that there are no obstacles before you start to lift or carry

When Lifting:

- Keep feet parted for stability
- Squat down bending at the knees (not your waist). Tuck your chin while keeping your back as vertical as possible.
- Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift.
- Begin slowly lifting with your LEGS by straightening them. Never twist your body during this step.
- Once the lift is complete, keep the object as close to the body as possible
- Pace yourself and get help before you try to lift a heavy load.
- Use mechanical lifting devices to lift and or move heavy objects. If using a forklift or similar type device, make sure you have the appropriate training.
- Slide heavy materials if possible, rather than lifting them. Planks and rollers can make this job easier.
- Storing materials at least 12 inches off the ground, can minimize having to lift directly off the ground.
- Never try to catch heavy falling objects.

Back injuries are one of the most common injuries found throughout the University and in industry. With this Toolbox Talk we will address proper lifting techniques, how to reduce the risk of a back injury and some other general safety tips.

Preparation: Some jobs require lifting and carrying heavy buckets. With prolonged use, a thin handle causes significant contact pressure on the hand. To prevent injuries when carrying buckets, consider the following safe practices:

- Ensure that you are wearing proper clothing and PPE
 - Steel toe shoes should always be worn when lifting heavy items
 - Gloves are also recommended when lifting certain objects
- Stretch before you attempt to lift a heavy object or at beginning of shift
- If possible, store materials at waist height to reduce the strain on your back
- Have materials delivered as close to final destination as possible
- Assess the object you are going to be lifting
 - Determine the weight of the object before lifting
 - Determine best place to grip the object
- Ensure that your travel path is free of slipping and tripping hazards
- Know your own lifting restrictions and capabilities

Get Help:

- Use carts, dollies, forklifts, and hoists to move materials
- When lifting a load more than 50 lbs, get help from another worker
- Use carrying tools with handles to carry odd-shaped loads

Other Useful Safety Tips:

- Take your time! You are more likely to be injured when you are tired or cold
- Lift as smoothly as possible, try not to “jerk” the lift

Group Discussion Topics:

- Has anyone had a back injury? How could this have been prevented?
- Are there common objects which you find yourself lifting frequently? Do you have specific procedures for lifting these objects?
- Do you have access to material handling equipment? If no, can you obtain them?



Proper Lifting Technique
Keep back straight and lift with the legs



Use Resources
Ask for help from coworkers and use available mechanical aids