



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

Lifting Safely

Eight out of ten Americans will eventually suffer a back injury or have some type of back pain. Back injuries are often difficult to treat and can result in lengthy and costly rehabilitation. It is important to stay healthy and in good shape so that we can do our jobs better and safer.

The back is a network of fragile ligaments, discs, and muscles that can easily be thrown out of order. The back's complex design breaks down when it's forced to perform activities it was not designed to do. Lifting with the back twisted or bent just begs for a pulled muscle or ruptured disc. One sure way to risk injuring the back is to lift heavy or bulky loads improperly or unassisted. Never be afraid to ask for help with loads that you know you cannot lift safely. Lift with good sense and a little extra help from a co-worker or mechanical aid when necessary.

Back injuries are extremely painful and they affect every movement you make. Your back is essential to sitting, standing, walking, and running. A back injury could mean severe pain during all of these activities. The risk of back injury increases during lifting. When lifting is done improperly, you become susceptible to hernias, back injuries, strains, sprains, bruises, and broken bones. To reduce the strain on your back, you must develop safe lifting habits.

Lifting properly starts before you pick up anything! Start by sizing up the load—estimate the weight and figure out how to get a good grip. You also need to figure out where and how you will put the load down at its destination.

Finally, check the route you'll be taking as you move the load—look for tripping hazards, steps, ramps, narrow or low openings, and make sure that all of the floors and walkways will support the weight of you and the load

Steps for Proper Lifting:

Plan ahead before lifting - Knowing what you're doing and where you're going will prevent you from making awkward movements while holding something heavy. Clear a path, and if lifting something with another person, make sure both of you agree to the plan.

Lift close to your body - You will be a stronger and more stable lifter if the object is held close to your body rather than at the end of your reach. Make sure you have a firm hold on the object you are lifting, and keep it balanced close to your body.

Keep your feet shoulder-width apart - A solid base of support is important while lifting. Holding your feet too close together will be unstable, too far apart will hinder movement. Keep the feet about shoulder-width apart and take short steps.

Bend your knees and keep your back straight - Practice the lifting motion before you lift the object and think about your motion before you lift. Focus on keeping your spine straight, and raise and lower to the ground by bending your knees.

Tighten your stomach muscles - Tightening your abdominal muscles will hold your back in a good lifting position and will help prevent excessive force on the spine.

Lift with your legs - Your legs are many times stronger than your back muscles—let this strength work in your favor. Again, lower to the ground by bending your knees, not your back. Keep your eyes focused upwards to help keep your back straight.

Get help if you're straining - If an object is too heavy, or awkward in shape, make sure you have someone around who can help you lift.

Following these principles can help to reduce job-related back injuries and back pain. Using good lifting and working techniques can also improve production and reduce job-related stress.

Remember:

Don't be afraid to ask for help. If an object is too heavy for you to lift, ask a co-worker for help. Know your body's limitations and don't overdo it. Whenever possible, avoid lifting altogether; use a mechanical lifting device such as a dolly, hand truck, pallet jack, forklift, front-end loader, or other material-handling device.

Back safety in action...prevent the need for traction!!

