

Pick Up Tips on How to Lift Safely

If your work involves lifting, you are likely at some risk for injury, especially to your lower back. When ever possible, try to eliminate the risk by re-thinking the work - reduce awkward postures and forceful movements. Reduce the weight, lifting time, distance the item is carried, and the repetitive nature. While it may not be realistic to completely eliminate all of the risks associated with lifting, the number and the severity of injuries may be greatly reduced by implementing these safe work practices.

Prepare and plan for the lift

- Wear lightweight, tear-resistant clothing, safety boots with slip-resistant soles, and protective gloves.
- Warm your muscles up with gentle stretches before you lift, especially if it is cold or if you have been sitting for a period of time.
- Test the load for weight and shifting contents by pulling or sliding it toward you. This will give you a good idea of how much it weighs and if you can lift it without over-exertion.
- Know the contents of a package so you can determine the proper lifting and lowering techniques to use.
- **Get help with heavy or awkward loads.** If available, use equipment such as hoists, lift trucks or carts to help with the lift.
- Know where you are going. Check that the path where you will travel is clear of obstacles and debris.
- Plan where to set the load down. Place loads on raised platform to avoid bending.

Lifting technique tips

- Stand close to the load and face the way you need to move. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart to give you the best balance.
- Get a good grip on the load using your full hands (not just fingers), and grasp opposite corners to avoid dropping the object.
- Slide the object toward your stomach (around the navel), and tighten your abdominal muscles in preparation for the lift.
- Tuck your chin into your chest.
- Lift smoothly, keeping your back straight, and hold the load as close to your body as possible.
- Whenever possible, avoid bending. If bending is necessary, keep the natural curve of your back and bend your knees to reach or place low-level objects.
- To move and change direction, move your feet and turn your whole body. Step or pivot, but don't twist or side bend.
- Keep the load between shoulder and knee height. Avoid over reaching.

General tips

- Take time to stretch, relax and rest your tired muscles to recover your strength between lifts.
- Rest more often when it is hot and humid.
- Repeated and long lifts are the most tiring so be sure to switch between heavy loads and lighter ones.