



Back Safety– Safety Talk

November 2011



Back injuries account for approximately 20% of all work-related injuries. Improper lifting is among the leading causes back injuries.

Lifting-related back injuries may seem to be a single incident; in reality, years of “micro-trauma” caused by improper lifting practices can be a major contributing factor to the injury.

EXAMPLES OF POOR LIFTING TECHNIQUES:

- Reaching while lifting;
- Bending at the waist instead of squatting to lift from the floor;
- Twisting while lifting;
- Attempting to lift objects that are too heavy;
- Lifting with forceful, jerky movements;
- Lifting or carrying objects on slippery floors or other poor footing;
- Lifting objects with awkward handles or grips; and
- Repetition of lifting with the poor techniques listed above.



Do not bend at the waist while lifting!

Something that causes discomfort in your back can lead to an injury.

Report these issues to your supervisor before they become serious injuries!

OTHER CAUSES OF BACK INJURIES:

- Slips, trips, and falls;
- Static and/or poor postures when sitting or standing for long periods of time;
- Fatigue or overuse;
- Vibrations; and
- Awkward postures such as bending and/or twisting at the waist.



Teamwork prevents injuries!

HOW TO PREVENT BACK INJURIES:

- Use proper lifting techniques (see side bar);
- Ask for help if lifting or carrying an object that is too heavy or awkward to handle;
- Use hand carts, lift trucks, pallet jacks, hoists, wheelbarrows, or other mechanical aids to lift or carry heavy/awkward objects;
- Rotate between sitting and standing tasks;
- Avoid using awkward postures to complete work tasks; and
- Arrange your work station so that you are not over-reaching or bending to grab your tools.

Steps to a proper lift:

1. Plan the lift – size up the load to see if you need some help to lift the object.
2. Stand as close to the object as possible.
3. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles.
5. Bend at the knees.
6. Get a good, firm grip on the load.
7. Hug the load.
8. Lift with your legs.
9. Avoid twisting and awkward movements.
10. When carrying: keep the load between hip and shoulder height.
11. When unloading: bend at your knees and keep your back straight.

For further information:

Review the Ergonomics Policy on the Environmental Health and Safety Website.

Back Safety and Ergonomics training are required upon employment.