



Safety Matters

Talking Points for Supervisors

Sample Client

Safe Lifting Techniques

Can you think of even one occupation where you never have to lift? Lifting is very much a part of our everyday lives and jobs. And, because of this, we tend to do it without thinking, or at least we do until our backs start to hurt.

Lifting incorrectly can result in a variety of injuries. Back strain is a very common one and it results from over-stretching certain muscles. But it can be avoided by practicing safe lifting techniques.

A hernia is another injury associated with lifting. It does not generally result from a single lifting effort but usually the result of continued extreme exertion, especially done contrary to the structure of the body.

Don't under-estimate the importance of being in good physical condition. Years of poor posture, overeating, lack of exercise, stress, and improper lifting can catch up with you. Learn how your back works and what you can do to keep it strong. Ask your physician for some recommended stretching, warm-up, and reconditioning exercises, and then practice them regularly.

Safe lifting plays an important role in keeping your back healthy. Although there doesn't seem to be just one correct way to lift an object, there are lifting techniques that take strain off the low back area. They include:

1. Look over the load. Decide if you can handle it alone or if you need help. When in doubt, ask for help. Moving an object that is too heavy is not worth strained and sore back muscles.

2. Clear away any potential obstacles before beginning to carry the object.
3. Support and propel the object while carrying it; your grip should be firm. Carrying objects will change your balance. To keep this change of balance to a minimum, keep the load close to your body and to your normal center of gravity, which is between the legs and shoulders.
4. Use good foot position. It allows you to keep your balance and brings into play the full power of your leg muscles. Leg muscles are more powerful and more durable than back muscles, so let your legs do the work.
5. Use your feet to change direction. Don't twist your body. It compounds the stress of the lift and affects your balance.

When someone is helping you lift, teamwork becomes important. If you're going to be carrying the load to another point, both of you should decide in advance how it is to be handled. Check the route and clearance. One person should be the leader and be in a position to observe and direct the other. Lifting and lowering should be done in unison. Don't let the load drop suddenly without warning your partner.

Everyone has a way of lifting that seems most natural. Examine yours to see if you are using the lifting techniques just discussed and reducing strain on your lower back.

Back strain is a common injury and it results from over-stretching certain muscles. But it can be avoided by practicing safe lifting techniques.