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Proper Lift Posture

Before lifting, think about what you're about to do. Examine the object for sharp corners, slippery spots or other potential hazards. Know and don't exceed your limit. Ask for help if needed or divide the load if possible. Make sure your travel path and destination are free of obstructions. Then follow these steps.



1. Stand close to the load with your feet spread apart about shoulder width, with one foot slightly in front of the other for balance.



2. Squat down bending at the knees (not your waist). Tuck your chin while keeping your back as vertical as possible.



3. Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift.



4. Begin slowly lifting with your LEGS by straightening them. Never twist your body during this step.



5. Once the lift is complete, keep the object as close to the body as possible. As the load's center of gravity moves away from the body, there is a dramatic increase in stress to the lumbar region of the back.

If you must turn while carrying the load, turn using your feet - not your torso.

Place heavy objects at waist height. To place the object below the level of your waist, follow the above steps in reverse order. For loads above waist high, get a stair or ladder and take the load up.

Commonly Asked Questions

Q. *What are some common causes of back injuries at work?*

- Lifting materials that are too heavy or unstable
- Lifting objects to or from awkward locations
- Repetitive twisting, bending, reaching overhead, or lifting
- Working for long periods in a bent over or strained position
- Slips, trips and falls, i.e., over debris

Q. *When carrying a load is it OK to turn, twist or bend my body?*

No. Twisting your torso or bending at the waist while carrying an object greatly increases the stress on your back. Minimize twisting your torso and keep your back straight. Use your feet to make turns while carrying the load and use your legs to raise and lower to/from storage.

Q. *Will wearing a back support belt increase my maximum lifting potential?*

No. Back support belts do not make you stronger; they merely remind of proper body position for lifting. Back belts should only be worn under doctor's supervision for the prescribed duration needed to rehabilitate a back injury.

Q. *How can I protect myself from overexertion injuries?*

- Lightening the load by:
 - Using a partner when lifting heavy objects.
 - Breaking a larger load into several smaller loads.
- Using proper tools and equipment (i.e., hand truck, cart, pallet jack, forklift, etc.).
- If you get tired, take a break.

Q. *How can sitting in my office hurt my back?*

To avoid back injuries from sitting for long periods of time, make sure your chair is ergonomically designed and adjusted to fit you. Take regular breaks to stretch or get up and walk.

Q. *Will exercising help me lift better?*

Physical conditioning or stretching programs can help reduce the risk of muscle strain.

Q. *Does my job require me to lift heavy objects?*

If your job requires routine lifting of more than 20 pounds it will be noted in your job description. Workers are discouraged from being assigned to jobs that exceed their strength capacities.

Four out of five people will experience low-back pain during their lifetime. Arms, shoulders and legs are also subject to body strains. A major cause is lifting incorrectly. Think *before* you lift.

Lifting Hazards	Possible Solutions
<p>Strains (from lifting heavy or large objects, awkward postures)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mechanical means (i.e., elevator, hand truck, pallet jack, forklift, lift gates, ramps, ladders, aerial lifts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure equipment is in working order (i.e., proper inflation or replace uneven or wobbling wheels) ○ Use hand trucks or carts with pneumatic wheels for moving over bumpy and uneven ground ○ Use ramps and/or powered/stair-climbing hand trucks to climb curbs, steps or stairs • Get other employee assistance when lifting loads, especially more than 50 pounds • Break a large load into smaller and more manageable loads especially when traversing stairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When possible, request that vendors and suppliers break down loads prior to delivery • Maintain neutral and straight spine alignment whenever possible. Usually, bending at the knees, not the waist (see attached handout – Proper Lift Posture) • Pushing is preferred to pulling • Store at height between mid-thigh to mid-chest

(continued)

Lifting Hazards	Possible Solutions
Slips, Trips and Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housekeeping, i.e., clear routes between storage areas and work spaces of obstructions (such as tools, equipment, cords and debris) and clean up slippery/wet surfaces • Provide adequate lighting • Wear proper fitting work gloves to assist with grasping the load and to avoid finger injuries • Wear safety shoes with toe protection (to protect against dropped loads) and skid-resistant soles • The load should not be stacked any higher than eye level in order to see directly over the load
Inadequate hand holds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use temporary handles such as suction devices for flat surfaces or furniture moving straps • Ask suppliers to place their materials in containers with proper handholds.
Repeated bending, reaching, turning, holding or standing for long times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place materials as close to work as possible • Limit exposure by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Taking regular breaks ○ Rotating employee between jobs ○ Rotating employees
Weather (affects body flexibility, endurance and recuperation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress properly for the heat or cold • Adjust work schedule to minimize exposure to extreme temperatures