

## ***Topic: Proper Lifting***

### **Protect Your Back by Lifting Properly**

If you haven't experienced back pain yet, consider yourself lucky. It's a very common ailment and is one of the top reasons given for missing work. In fact, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), approximately eight out of ten people will experience low back pain at some point in their lives.

### **What Causes Back Pain**

The back is a complicated structure of bones, joints, ligaments and muscles. If any of these are sprained, strained or irritated, back pain will result.

Other causes of back pain include poor posture, diseases of internal organs, or even psychological stress. Back pain can also result from not lifting in a safe manner.

### **How to Lift Correctly**

One of the biggest mistakes people make while lifting is to rely on the muscles in their backs, instead of the stronger muscles in their legs. Another big mistake they make is to twist while they lift.

Here are some tips for correct lifting:

- Before lifting, plan your route. Ensure that your walking path is clear.
- Assess what you'll be carrying. Is the object too heavy or awkward for you to lift it alone?
- If you need help lifting, ask a co-worker to help you or use a hand-truck, dolly or other lifting device.
- If you know you can lift the object safely by yourself, position your body directly in front of the object and as close to it as possible.
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and tighten your stomach muscles. This keeps your back in a good position to protect your spine.
- Bend at your hips and knees and squat down close to the object, keeping your back straight.
- Lift the object with your hands and bring it close to your body.
- Looking straight ahead, use your leg muscles to bring yourself to a standing position. Be careful to keep the object below shoulder height.
- Carry the object to its destination, using short steps.
- When setting the object down, do not twist your upper body. If you must move sideways, turn your entire body.
- If you need to lift an object more than once, place it down on a countertop or table, so that it can be moved from a standing position.

# TOOLBOX TALKS



## Final Word

Lifting even a light load the wrong way can result in a painful back injury. Protect yourself by following correct lifting procedures.

## Questions:

1. Psychological stress can be a cause of back pain.

True or False

2. The muscles in the back are stronger than the muscles in the leg.

True or False

3. You should tighten your stomach muscles when you lift.

True or False

4. When carrying a heavy load, you should take long strides to get to your destination faster.

True or False

5. When lifting a heavy object, you should hold it as far away from you as possible so that if it drops, it doesn't land on your feet.

True or False

## Answers:

1 True, 2 False, 3 True, 4 False, 5 False

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