



How to protect your back while lifting

One wrong lift can strain your back and lead to a lengthy recovery process. In fact, injuries caused by lifting are one of the leading causes of missed workdays. Whether you're lifting three pounds or 30, it's important to warm up, plan your task, use safe lifting techniques and carry items correctly.

Warm up

Before lifting materials, it's important to warm up your muscles. Take at least 10 to 15 minutes to get your body ready for work. Start with dynamic or active stretching, where you're slowly moving instead of holding a stretch. Common examples include squats, arm circles, neck rolls and trunk twists. Once your muscles have warmed up a bit, you can move on to static stretching where you hold a stretch for about 30 seconds. Make sure to target areas such as your quadriceps, hamstrings and wrists.

Prepare and plan

Before each lift, take a minute to prepare and plan. First, size up the load. If an item is too heavy for you to pick up using the correct form, get assistance from a coworker or use a lifting device. The same rule applies for items that are too large for you to see over. Next, check for hazards. Make sure there are no sharp edges or other hazards on the materials you'll be lifting. Depending on the material, you may need to wear gloves. And finally, plan your route. If you'll be carrying the items, make sure that your path is clear before lifting.

Use safe lifting techniques

After warming up and planning, focus and follow safe lifting techniques to protect your back.

- Stand centered to the load with your feet about shoulder width apart and position yourself so that you're facing the load with your feet close to the base.
- Bend your knees, keep your back straight and squat with your weight evenly distributed between your feet and your chest facing forward, not down.
- Securely grasp the load with both hands and keep it level.
- Slowly and smoothly, stand up using your leg strength while keeping your eyes and chin up.
- Keep the load close to your body to reduce the chance of strain on your shoulders, arms and back.
- If at any point you feel uncomfortable with the weight, slowly place the load back down while bending your legs and get assistance.

Carry items correctly

When carrying items, maintain proper posture to avoid straining your back or falling.

- Keep the item close to your body and positioned at about hip-height so that you can see over it.
- Always walk forward so that you can keep an eye on the path ahead.
- When you need to change directions, turn your entire body rather than twisting at the waist.
- Your nose should always be facing in the same direction as your toes.



Discussion questions

1. What type of stretching should you begin with while warming up?
2. What are the three steps you should take while planning your lifting task?
3. How should you position your body before beginning your lift?
4. What should you do if you feel uncomfortable during a lift?
5. How should you safely change directions when carrying a load?

Answers

1. When warming up, start with dynamic or active stretching, where you're slowly moving instead of holding a stretch.
2. To prepare and plan, size up the load, check for hazards on the load and plan your route.
3. When preparing to lift, stand centered to the load with your feet about shoulder width apart and position yourself so that you're facing the load with your feet close to the base.
4. If at any point you feel uncomfortable with the weight, slowly place the load back down while bending your legs and get assistance.
5. When you need to change directions while carrying a load, turn your entire body rather than twisting at the waist.

Meeting notes:

Employee comments/concerns: _____

Other safety issues to be addressed on the job/facility: _____

Training record:

Date: _____ Job site/facility: _____
 Trainer: _____ Title: _____

Employee name (print)	/ (signature)	Employee name (print)	/ (signature)
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