

BACK INJURIES - SAFE LIFTING

OVER ►

The back is one of the strongest anatomical structures of the body, however, heavy lifting, can weaken the back. Pain can occur anywhere along your spine from the neck down. The pain can arise from many structures in your back. Structures making up the back include the bones (vertebrae), the joints between the vertebrae, the discs that serve as cushions, the ligaments, the muscles, and the nerves. Some jobs involve a lot of manual lifting and back, neck, and shoulder injuries are very common. Manual lifting in cramped or awkward conditions can also increase the risk of injury.

Safe Lifting Tips

- >> Come up with a plan for your lift.
- >> Identify controls for safe lifting.
- >> Know how to lift safely.
- >> Use a 2-person lift.



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Come Up with a Plan for Your Lift

- Size up the load.
- Make sure the path is clear.
- Get help if you need it.
- Use a dolly or other materials handling equipment whenever you can.

Identify Controls for Safe Lifting

- Avoid lifting above shoulder height. This causes your back to arch and puts a lot of stress on your shoulder and on the small joints in your spine.
- Don't try to catch falling objects. Your muscles may not have time to coordinate properly to protect your spine.
- Push rather than pull. Pushing lets you maintain the normal curves in your back and puts less stress on the spine.

Know How to Lift Safely

- Get as close to the load as possible. This is very important. Our lifting capacity is reduced the further away we are from the load.
- Put yourself in the best possible position for the lift.
- Try to avoid twisting from the waist, reaching out, and leaning over material or equipment when you lift.
- Use a well-balanced stance with one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as you start to lift.
- Keep your lower back in its normal curved position and use your legs to lift.
- Pick up your feet and pivot to turn. Don't twist your back.
- Lower the load. Maintain the curve in your lower back. You can hurt your back just as easily lowering a load as lifting it.

Use a 2-Person Lift

- Partners should be roughly the same height.
- Before the lift, both partners should agree on:
 - the type of lift (waist-high, shoulder-high, etc.);
 - who will take charge; and
 - how they will lower the load.