



Train. Protect. Prevent.

## BACK PROTECTION—SAFE LIFTING

IS YOUR BACK CARRYING TOO HEAVY A WORKLOAD? Nearly everyone, as part of their jobs, has to lift things throughout the workday. For some employees, lifting heavy things is one of their primary tasks, while most workers are faced with occasionally lifting average-sized loads. Unfortunately, everyone is at risk to back injury if there are poor lifting habits. Eight out of ten adults will suffer a significant back injury at least once in their lives. One might not be able to avoid lifting things while performing a job, but changing HOW the item is lifted may prevent a serious and painful injury.



HOW MANY "PIECES OF STRAW" CAN THE BACK HANDLE? The weight of an object is not always a contributing factor in a back injury. Furthermore, back injuries are often the result of continued bad habits rather than a single event. Years of lifting with a bent back, over reaching, and twisting while carrying will eventually cause one's back to fail. **The most serious back injuries are not pulled muscles. The individual vertebrae that collectively form the spine are separated by flexible disks designed to allow flexibility of movement.** If the disks are continually over strained, they will compress on the nerves that pass through them from the spine and cause considerable pain. These injuries, if not permanent, can still take years to recover. The following suggestions will help prevent back injury when lifting and carrying.

**FIVE STEPS FOR LIFTING AN OBJECT SAFELY:** (1) Establish a firm footing. Keep feet slightly apart to help maintain your balance. (2) Drop one knee to the floor. Tip the item onto thigh. (3) Tighten your stomach muscles. These muscles help support the back. (4) Lift with the legs and keep the chin up. Legs contain some of the most powerful muscles in the body. If the chin is kept up by fixing the focus on an object high on the wall, the back will remain in a good vertical position. (5) Keep the load close to the body. An item held close to the body exerts less strain on the back than holding it with arms extended.

**NO ONE IS IMMUNE TO BACK INJURY.** Whether you have a strong back or have hurt your back before, it is well worth your time to stop yourself before casually picking up a light or heavy load. Be sure to plan in your mind for the best way to lift what's in front of you. Taking this simple step could include enlisting help from one or more people. Remember to lift and move slowly and carefully; the time you take to use the right lifting mechanics is far less than the days, weeks, or months it can take to heal from a back injury.

**BACK BRACES, SUPPORTS OR "LIFTING BELTS"** These devices are not endorsed as tools for the prevention of back injuries. Although they may be useful in some instances of rehabilitation or as prescribed by a physician, these devices are not considered a legitimate ergonomic means in the long-term prevention of low back disorders. **Remember:** Back belts in no way will eliminate your exposure to the hazard.

Work Site Review: Hazards/Safety Suggestions

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Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Site Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foreman/Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signatures: (continue on back of sheet if necessary)

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(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness)

**Manager/Supervisor's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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