

5 Key Safe Lifting Tips

Back injuries accounted for 1 in 5 workplace injuries. While OSHA does not specifically regulate back safety, it is implied in the general duty clause “providing a workplace that is free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm”.

The back is a network of fragile ligaments, discs, and muscles which can easily be thrown out of order. The back’s complex design breaks down when it’s forced to perform activities it was not designed to do. While there are no guaranteed rules for safe lifting, below are 5 key tips to follow in order to avoid injury.

Eliminate manual lifting when possible

- 1 Never be afraid to ask for help with loads that you know you cannot lift safely.**

Move in so that your feet are close to the base of the object to be lifted

- 2** Face the object squarely, bend your knees and squat, and lift by straightening your legs. Avoid lifting from the floor.

Make sure you have a good grip on the item

- 3** If the item is oversized, awkward or unbalanced, it may be difficult to lift and carry safely. Get a mechanical lifting aid or assistance.

Store heavier objects at waist level

- 4** This allows retrieving the item easier when it must be relocated.

Plan ahead

- 5** Decide how you will lift, carry and place an object before picking it up. Test the weight by tipping it or moving it first. If assistive devices are not available, break the load down into smaller units.
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A good way to learn the right from the wrong way to lift is to practice lifting correctly a few times. You will notice that the correct way to lift is the easiest way to lift the load, with the least strain and awkwardness. To lift the wrong way will, over time, cause injury and pain. The back can be damaged quickly but can take a long time to heal.

For more information on this topic, please contact Alliant Risk Control Consulting at (949) 260-5042 or riskcontrol@alliant.com

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