



## Toolbox Talks

### Safer Lifting Techniques

Discussion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### ***Lifting technique summary***

- *Stay in shape*
- *Size up the load; ask for help, if needed*
- *Get a good grip*
- *Keep the load close*
- *Keep your balance with footwork*
- *Let your leg muscles do the work*
- *Don't twist your body*

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#### **Introduction**

Can you think of even one job or occupation where you never have to manually handle an object? Handling of objects can range from very light objects such as a piece of paper or a pen, to very heavy objects like loads of boxes or machinery. Manually handling objects is very much a part of many of our every day jobs. Therefore, because it is something we do so often, we tend to do it without thinking, or at least we do until we strain a muscle, or worse, hurt our backs.

Handling loads incorrectly can result in a variety of injuries. Back strain is very common. It results from over-exerting certain muscles, but it may be avoided by practicing safe load handling techniques. A hernia is another injury associated with lifting. Back injuries and hernias generally do not result from a single object handling effort. It is usually the result of continued extreme exertion, especially done contrary to the structure of body.

#### **General Techniques**

Safe material handling plays an important role in keeping your back healthy. Although there does not seem to be just one right method to lift and move an object, there are general techniques that may take some strain off the low back area.

These techniques have several steps in common. They recommend you "size up the object handling" (e.g. assess the load, the object handling task, and the area where the handling task will be conducted). Decide if you can handle it alone or if you need help. When in doubt, ask for help. Also look over the area where you are carrying the object to, and make sure it is clear of obstacles before beginning to move the object. Moving an object that is too heavy for one person or in an area with other hazards is not worth strained and sore back muscles.

Get a good grip on the object. Attaching yourself to a load will change your balance. To keep this change of balance to a minimum, keep the load close to your body, to your normal center of gravity between the legs, between the shoulders.



## Toolbox Talks

# Safer Lifting Techniques

Employee Participants:

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### General Techniques (Cont.)

Good foot position allows you to keep your balance and bring into play the full power of your leg muscles. Leg muscles are more powerful and in some ways less prone to injury than back muscles. Let your leg muscles do the work. Again, footwork is important once you avoid twisting your upper body. Use your feet to change direction. Don't twist your body. Twisting compounds the stress of the lift and affects your balance.

When you have someone helping you maneuver an object, teamwork becomes important. If you are going to be carrying the load to another point, both of you should decide in advance how it is to be handled. Check the route and clearance. One person should be the leader and be in a position to observe and direct the other. Lifting and lowering should be done in unison. Don't let the load drop suddenly without warning your partner.

Everyone has a way of lifting that seems most natural. Examine yours to see if you are using lifting techniques that reduce strain on your lower back.



### Importance of Physical Shape

Don't underestimate the importance of being in good physical condition. Years of poor posture, overeating, lack of exercise, stress and improper lifting can catch up with you. Learn how your back works and what you can do to keep it strong. Ask for your medical professional's recommended stretching, warm-up, reconditioning exercises, and diet; then practice them regularly.

### Discussion

What are additional things we can do to potentially reduce back pain?