

Safe Lifting Technique

DC 37 Safety and Health Fact Sheet

Lifting, carrying loads or material handling are routine, work tasks performed by many employees daily at work. While the chances for injury are great, it is preventable if safe lifting techniques or mechanical means are used when possible. Common injuries resulting from lifting include shoulder and back injuries, strains and sprains, slips and trips. Bending, followed by twisting and turning are common movements that lead to back injuries. Strains and sprains commonly result from lifting loads improperly, or too big, too heavy or awkwardly shaped. In 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 128,220 cases involving injuries to the back and 79,360 cases involving overexertion in lifting or lowering materials.

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Overexertion in lifting or lowering:
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Preparation

Prior to lifting, carrying a load:

Assess how heavy, or awkward it is.

Should mechanical means (e.g. hand truck, wheeled cart, be used?

Does it require more than one person?

Does the load have adequate handholds? Should it be placed into a container with handles making it easier to carry?

Is the pathway clear? Are there any tripping hazards, stairs, obstructions, limited sight areas?

Lifting

Get as close to the load as possible.

Keep your elbows and arms close to your body.

Keep your back straight during the lift by tightening the stomach muscles.

Bend at the knees, keep the load close and centered in front of you, and look up and ahead.

Get a good handhold and do not twist while lifting. Do not jerk; use a smooth motion while lifting.

If the load is too heavy to allow this, find someone to help you with the lift.

KEYS

Assess the load.
Use mechanical options when possible.

Plan the route

Get as close to the load as possible.
Hug the load.

Try to keep your elbows and arms close to your body.

Keep your back straight

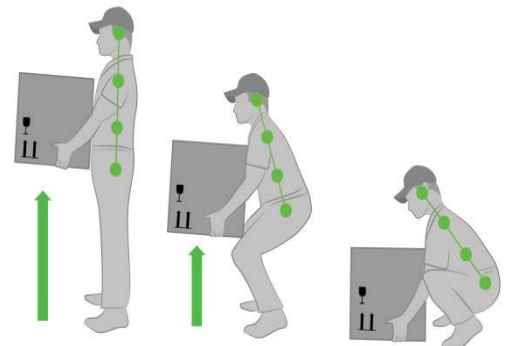
Bend your knees

Look straight ahead

Avoid twisting or leaning

Know your limit. If the load is too heavy, large or awkwardly shaped, get help.

Push rather than pull a load.



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Carrying

Do not twist and turn instead move your feet to turn

Keep your hips, shoulders knees and toes facing the same direction.

Keep your elbows close to your side.

If fatigued, set the load down and rest.

Use mechanical means whenever possible e.g. hand trucks, pushcarts, mechanical lift tables, conveyor belts, mail carts, ramps, forklifts.

Utilize the “power zone” concept. Place items to be moved on shelves, tables, racks or pallets in the mid-thigh to mid-chest area eliminating the need to lift items from the floor level.

Separate loads into smaller, lighter loads to limit force exertion when possible.

Limit lifting weights to under 50 pounds.

Do not hold items for long periods.

Setting Down

Set the load down in the same way you picked it up, but in the reverse order.

Bend at the knees, not the hips.

Keep your head up, your stomach muscles tight, and do not twist your body.

Keep the load as close to the body as possible.

Wait until the load is secure to release your handhold.

Use a device to lift and reposition heavy objects to limit force exertion

Reposition a work table to eliminate a long/excessive reach and enable working in neutral postures