

Safety Note # 10

SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES



According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, out of 349,050 total musculoskeletal disorders reported, 134,550 cases, which is 38.5% of the total cases, were back injuries that occurred in the workplace. Completing tasks that require heavy lifting, repetitive stress, bending and twisting, and pushing/pulling increases the risk of developing lower back pain. Poor posture, age, medical conditions, body weight, smoking, and exercise habits may also contribute.

For further safe lifting training, Videos E-005 and S005 Back Safety are available from the ANR Environmental Health and Safety Library.

Remember the Three Safe Lifting Mechanics

- (1) Bend your knees and straighten your back
- (2) Get a good grip and keep your wrists straight
- (3) Bring your eyes up before lifting

Best Practices Before Lifting or Moving

- Use equipment such as a cart or dolly to move the objects that are heavy or need to travel a longer distance.
- Assess the object's weight. If the object is too heavy or bulky, ask someone for help.
- If possible, disassemble larger objects into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Ensure a safe path free of debris, obstacles, and stairs.
- Ensure a clear line of vision when carrying objects.

Tips for a Healthier Back

- Take frequent breaks to interrupt repetitive lifting, mix in tasks that do not involve lifting, and take breaks to stretch.
- Use a stool or ladder to reach loads above your shoulders. Get as close to the load as possible before sliding it towards you. Work with your arms and legs – not your back.
- Take extra care with loads under racks or cabinets. Pull the load towards you, try to support the load on one knee before you lift, and use your legs to power the lift.
- Slide objects instead of lifting and carrying them.
- Push objects instead of pulling them.
- Plan tasks ahead of time to limit lifting and moving.
- Use dollies and push carts to assist with moving objects. For extremely heavy items, get assistance from an authorized forklift operator.
- Design your workstation in a layout that avoids excessive bending, twisting, and stretching. Use tool supports for prolonged tool use.