

FOCUS ON FACTS

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Lifting safely

Lifting is the most common cause of low back pain at work. Three out of every four Canadians have back pain at some time if their job includes lifting. There is no one way to lift safely. But certain precautions can reduce the risk of on-the-job injury.

Plan before you lift.

Remove any anything that is in the way. Pushing is easier than pulling. Pulling is easier than carrying. Lowering loads causes less strain than lifting.

Get help for heavy or bulky loads. Use equipment like a cart to help when possible.

Warm up your muscles with gentle stretches

before you lift. This is very important if you have been sitting for more than 15 minutes before lifting.

Test the weight of the load first. Be sure that you can handle it safely. A big load of the same weight will put more strain on your body than a small

load. Break your load into smaller or lighter loads.

Face the way you need to move. Avoid twisting or side bending. Turn your entire body. Place your feet wide apart to keep your balance.

Hold the load close to your body. Grip the load using your whole hand not just the fingers. Using your whole hand will give you the greatest grip area and strength. Balance your load evenly between both arms.



- **FACE THE WAY YOU NEED TO MOVE.**
- **LIFT WITH AS STRAIGHT A BACK AS IS COMFORTABLE.**
- **HOLD THE LOAD CLOSE TO YOUR BODY.**

Lift with as straight a back as is comfortable.

Tighten your abdominal (stomach) muscles. Bend your legs so they do the lifting.

Keep the load between shoulder and knee height. Avoid reaching.

Change your position and stretch to relax and rest your tired muscles. You need time to recover your strength between lifts to be able to work safely.

Repeated and long lifts are the most tiring. Switch between heavy loads and lighter ones.

Plan where to set the load down. Place loads on raised platform. Leave enough room for your hands to grip the load. Avoid placing loads directly on the floor.

Rest more often when it is hot and humid.

Take more time to warm up your muscles when it is cold.

Take more breaks if you are also using tools or equipment that vibrate.

How much can I lift safely?

There is no single safe weight for lifting. The answer depends on many factors, including:

- height, weight, and age of worker
- fitness level, health problems and previous injuries
- size and shape of the load
- grip on the load
- distance between you and the load
- distance and the direction that you lift the load
- how often and how much time you spend lifting
- how often and how long are your breaks
- floor surface



Poor



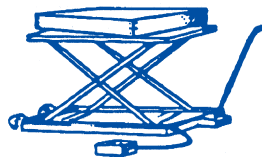
Improved

KEEP THE BACK AS STRAIGHT AS IS COMFORTABLE. HOLD THE LOAD CLOSE TO THE BODY.

The employer's responsibility

The employer is responsible for safety and health in the workplace. The Workplace Safety and Health Act requires that the employer ensure the safety, health, and welfare of all the workers in a way that is reasonably practical. This should be done in cooperation with the health and safety committee or worker representative. Employers can:

- provide adjustable tables for lifting at waist height
- provide mechanical aids, for example, dolly, hoist, forklift
 - encourage workers to get help to move bulky and heavy loads or to make smaller loads.



additional rest breaks for workers to relax tired muscles when lifting.

- teach and regularly review safe lifting methods.
- schedule

What can you do?

You can ask your joint health and safety committee or worker representative to review lifting tasks at your workplace.

If you need more information contact:

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