



INFORMATIONAL BROCHURES EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Subject: Safe Lifting

One of the most frequent causes of back injuries in the workplace is lifting. And not all of the injuries result from *improper* lifting. Most of these injuries can be prevented by following a few practical safeguards.

Not all of us are made the same way so we need to complete tasks within each of our own capabilities. With the advent of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) regulations, it is important that people realize there are better ways to move and handle items we work with everyday other than lifting. You can push, pull (be careful here), get some help from fellow worker, place on a cart, use a hand truck, or even get someone else to do it who may be better able to handle the task.

If you have to lift an item, be sure to follow proper mechanics in performing this task. That includes: straddle the load – good balance between your feet, heft the load to determine actual weight (you could check the labeling but if items are repackaged, it might not be accurate), **keep your back straight** during the lift – use your legs to push up, and **don't twist** while you are in the process of lifting. The majority of back injuries come from using your back to lift and twisting while lifting.

There are other things that affect safe lifting and material handling. They include: hugging the load – any extension of a lifting/carrying load away from your body places extra weight on your back muscles and vertebrae, good footwear so you don't slip, keeping the walkway clear of obstructions, and working with loads in your most efficient ergonomic zone, e.g. shoulders to the waist. Try not to work with loads over your

head. You should use a ladder if you have to lift and place a load higher than your shoulders.

One of the best ways to maintain good back health is walking every day (a mile to maintain conditioning, more to increase fitness) and doing exercises that strengthen your abdomen. For those kinds of exercises, you should consult your physician but some basic ones include: modified sit-ups, laying face-up and slightly raising your legs – holding your feet about 6"-12" above the floor, leg extensions or presses on an exercise bench, and some basic isometric techniques such as alternate tightening and relaxing your abdominal muscles.

You don't have to suffer through a back injury. Think about what you are doing and work within the capabilities of your body, and exercise. Take the time to do it right.