

(PAPERPORT)




# Lifting Safely





# Use your head to lift safely

A cartoon illustration of a man with a large nose, wearing a blue graduation cap and a red shirt. He is resting his chin on his hand, looking thoughtful.

**Safe lifting means using common sense.**

The simple techniques in this booklet—mostly planning your lifts and bending your knees—will show you how to avoid injuries.

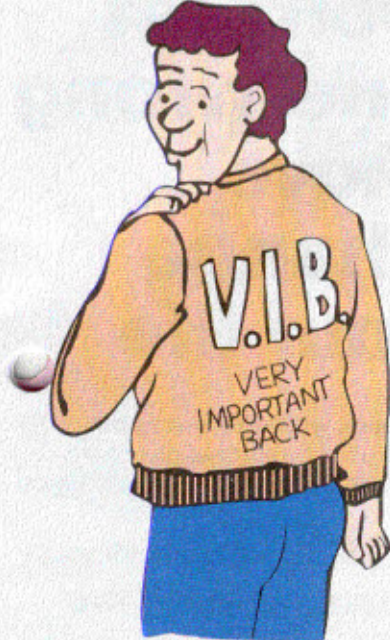
## Lifting

**We do it all the time**, at home and on the job, but we don't always do it right. Safe lifting isn't just a question of strength—it's a commitment to lifting correctly, every time you pick up or move something.

**Back injuries, often from poor lifting techniques**, are the most common type of serious occupational injury. In fact, at some time in their lives, eight out of ten people will have back pain.

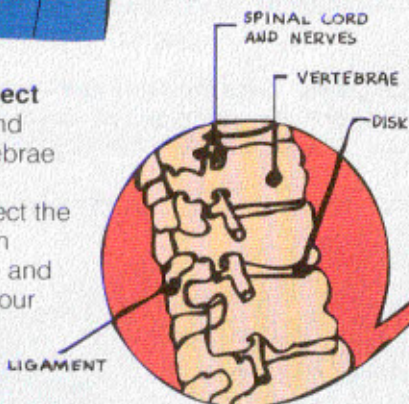


# Your Back is Important— treat it with care



In fact, it supports your whole body. The spinal column, an S-shaped stack of vertebrae (bones), literally holds you up.

Ligaments connect the vertebrae, and between the vertebrae are soft discs that cushion and protect the bones. Nerves run through the spine and go to the rest of your body.



**Your back is supported by muscles** that run along the spinal column, working closely with the muscles in your stomach. Being overweight, especially if you have a potbelly, puts a lot of extra strain on those muscles. It's even worse if you're out of shape, because the muscles get weak and can't do their job well.

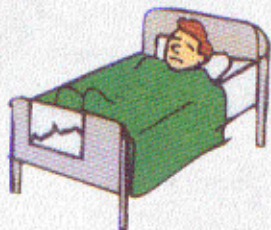


# Don't let one wrong move change your life

You can hurt your back with one wrong move. Or damage may occur from long-term stress on weakened muscles. Some other common problems:

- Muscle spasms caused by tension and stress.
- Strains and sprains from working unused muscles too hard or lifting incorrectly.
- Tears or damage to the gel-like discs between vertebrae may impair their cushioning ability. Eventually vertebrae rub together, irritating or damaging spinal nerves. This is commonly called a "slipped disc."
- Hernias (ruptures in the abdominal wall) caused by strains from lifting.

In addition to missing work, lifting injuries can mean a lifetime of pain, often severely limiting recreational, social, and job activities. Surgery and medical bills are another unpleasant possibility.

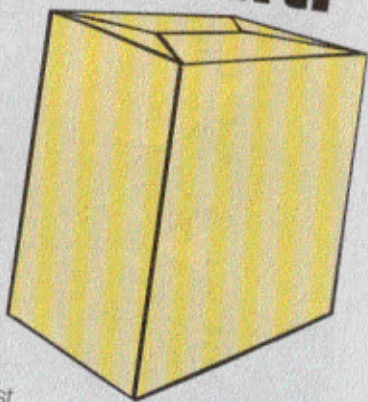


**Your back is meant only to hold your body up.** If you use your back, instead of your legs, to help you lift an object, you'll get hurt sooner or later.

# Use your brain to avoid strain. Plan your lift!



Safe lifting  
starts before  
you even pick  
up the load.



*Know the route you'll follow.*

- ☒ Choose the flattest, straightest, and clearest route, even if it's a little longer.
- ☒ Move any objects you might trip over.
- ☒ Look for places where you can stop and rest.
- ☒ Make sure that the unloading area is clear.

**Check the object you'll be carrying and make sure**

- the weight is stable and distributed evenly
  - there's nothing sharp or abrasive sticking out
  - it's light enough to be carried alone.
- If it's too heavy or awkward,

**get help.**



**Decide how you'll lift and carry before  
you pick anything up.**



# Here's how to lift and carry safely

bend your knees—  
not your back!

## Loading

Stand close to  
the load.

Grip firmly with  
your hands, not  
just your fingers.

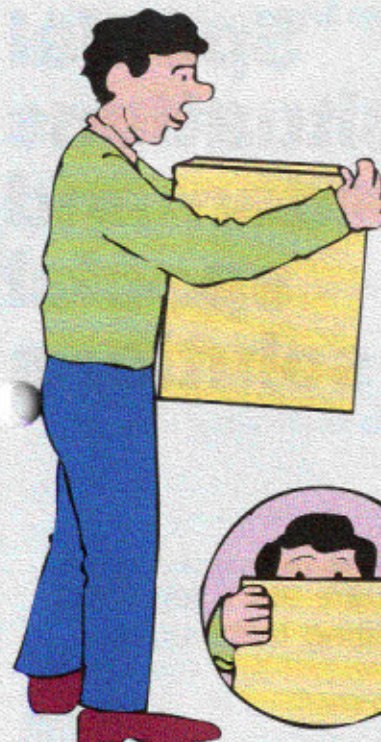


Bring the load close to your body for more power and less strain. Keep your arms and elbows tucked in for more power. Keep your weight centered.

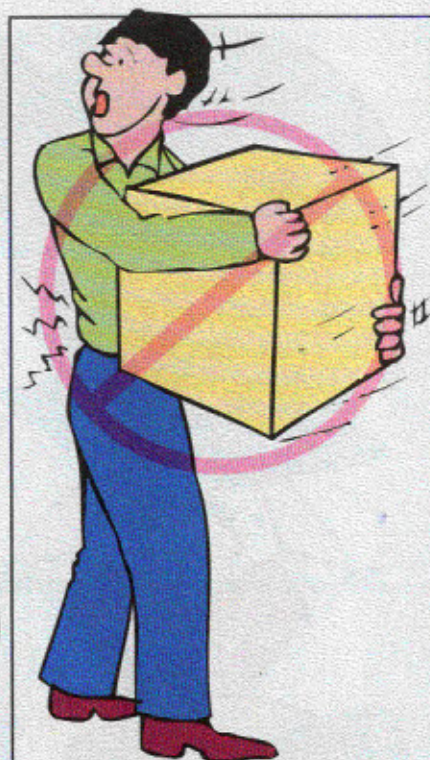
Let your legs do the work. Lift your head and shoulders first, then let your legs push your body up slowly and smoothly.

## Unloading

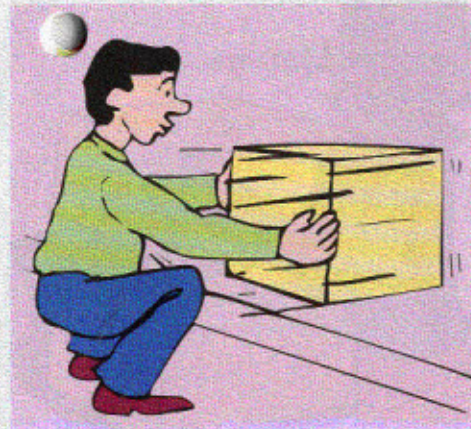
To unload, face the spot you have chosen and lower the load slowly.



Make sure you can see where you're going. Move slowly, with small steps.



**DON'T TWIST YOUR BODY.** Twisting is a major cause of injury. If you have to change direction, move your feet first.

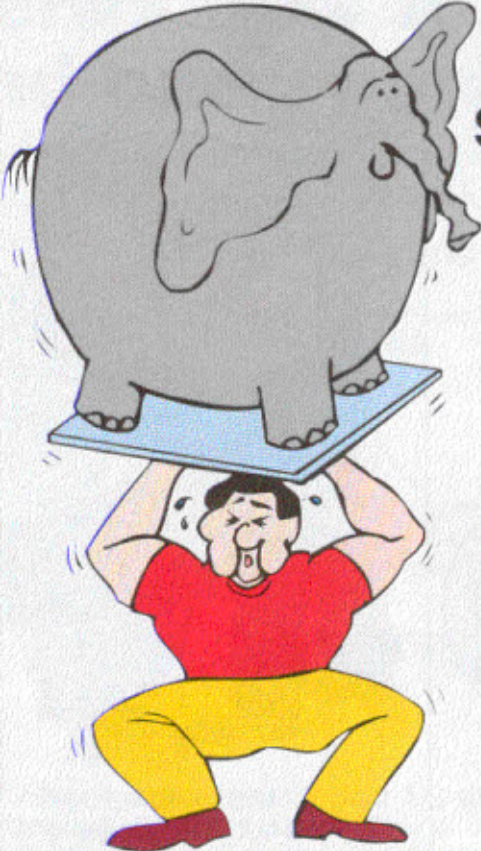


**Bend your knees** and let your legs, not your back, do the work.

**Keep your fingers** away from the bottom and place the load on the edge of the surface, then slide it back.

**Remember, when you lift,** your back is supporting you and the load you're carrying. Follow these steps to avoid any unnecessary strain.





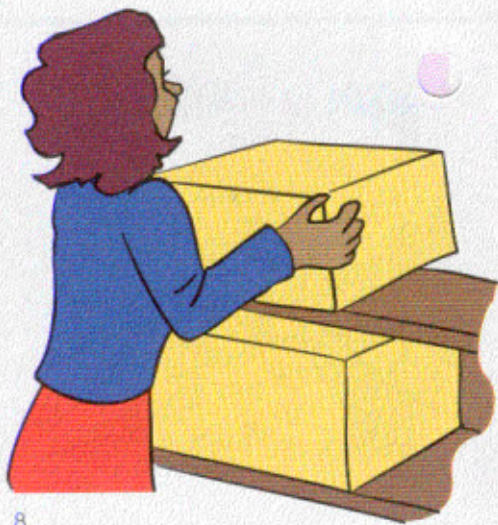
# Special situations demand special solutions

Here are a few more lifting techniques.

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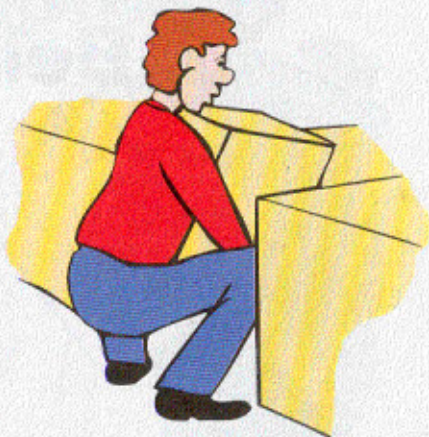
## Lifting or lowering from a high place

- Stand on a platform instead of a ladder.
- Lift the load in smaller pieces if possible.
- Push up on the load to see how heavy and stable it is.
- Slide the load as close to yourself as possible before lifting.
- Grip firmly and slide it down.
- Get help when you need it to avoid injury.



## Lifting from hard-to-get-at places

- Get as close to the load as possible.
- Maintain your back's natural curves, and keep stomach muscles tight.
- Push buttocks out behind you.
- Bend your knees.
- Use leg, stomach, and buttock muscles to lift—not your back



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## Drums, barrels, and cylinders present special problems

If too heavy to be comfortably lifted, get help or use a special mechanical device. Caution: these loads can suddenly shift if filled.



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## Awkward Objects

- Bend your knees with feet spread.
- Grip the top outside and bottom inside corners.
- Use your legs to lift, keeping back straight.





# Don't Get Hurt Being a Hero



If a load is too  
big or heavy to  
carry without  
strain,

**get  
help!**



**Use a cart, dolly,  
forklift, wheelbarrow,  
or other carrier. Or  
get another person to  
share the load.**



## A two-person lift works best if

- both people are about the same height.
- one person is in charge of saying when to move where.
- you lift and raise at the same time.
- you keep the load at the same level while carrying it.
- you move smoothly together.
- you unload at the same time.

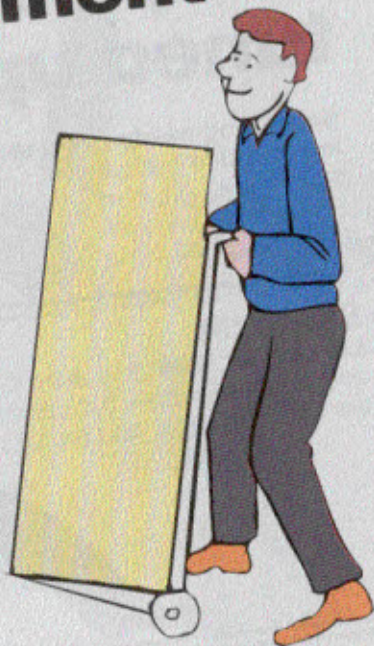




# Special Equipment Can Help

When using a hand truck, dolly, or other material handling equipment, follow these tips:

- Push, don't pull—you'll get twice the power.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Have a firm grip.
- Keep your back straight, knees bent, and lean in the direction of movement.
- Let your legs and body weight do the work.



## A few more hints for safe lifting

- Warm up before you lift—it's an athletic task! Bend or stretch gently to get ready.
- Try to break a large load into several smaller ones.
- Wear safety shoes with reinforced toes and nonskid soles.
- Wear tight-fitting gloves to protect your hands and get a better grip.
- Avoid loose clothing that could get in your way.
- Try to load and unload at waist height.

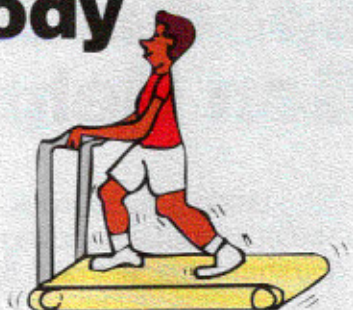


Most important, don't overdo it. The risk of injury is too great. Know your own limitations and get help if you need it.



# Keep your body tuned up

**Safe lifting needs back, stomach, and leg muscles** that can handle the job. So make it easy on yourself by staying in shape. Here are a few exercises to stretch and strengthen those muscles.



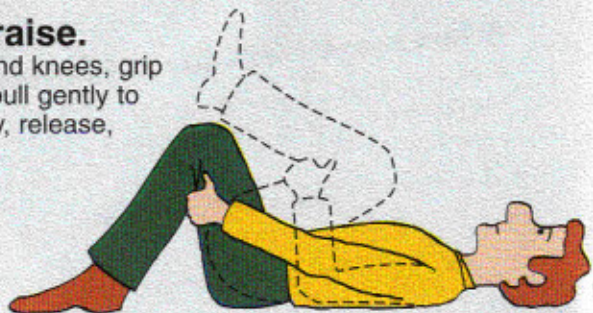
## Pelvic tilt.

**Lie on your back**, knees bent, feet flat on the floor and press your lower back against the floor. Hold for a few seconds, relax, and repeat.



## Knee to chest raise.

**Lie on your back.** Bend knees, grip with both hands, and pull gently to your chest. Hold briefly, release, relax, and repeat.



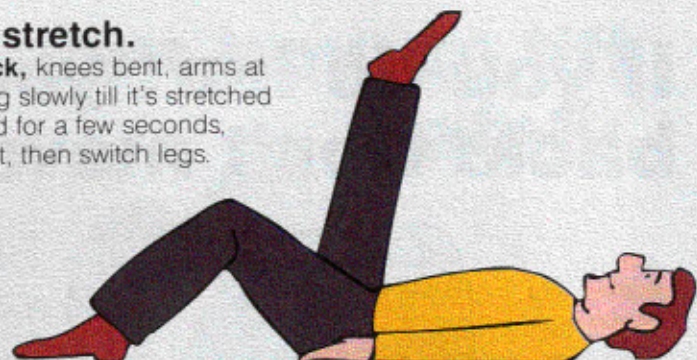
## Half sit-up.

**Lie on your back**, knees bent, arms at sides. Slowly pull head, neck, and shoulders up and raise arms to touch your knees. Hold for a few seconds, lie back slowly. Repeat.



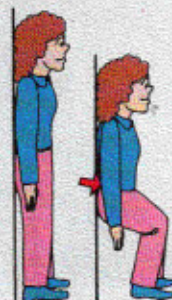
## Hamstring stretch.

**Lie on your back**, knees bent, arms at sides. Lift one leg slowly till it's stretched pointing up. Hold for a few seconds, lower, and repeat, then switch legs.



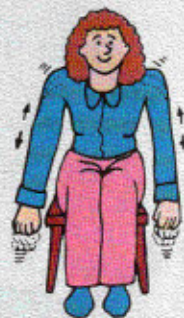
## Wall slide.

**Stand with your back to a wall**, legs slightly apart. Pull in stomach and buttocks until your lower back presses the wall. Then move your feet out a little, slide your back down the wall until you're "half sitting." Hold briefly, then slide slowly up. Repeat.



## Shoulder shrug.

**Stand or sit**, head up and arms at sides. Shrug shoulders as close to your ears as you can. Hold a few seconds, relax, and repeat.



**Good standing and sitting posture** and a regular exercise routine will help your back and you.

**Before starting any exercise program**, check with your doctor first.



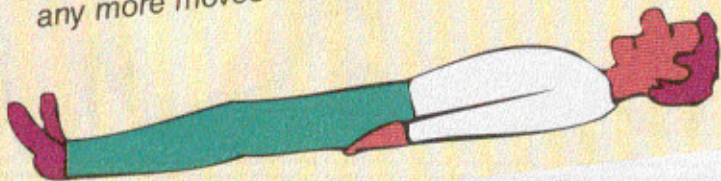


# If you do hurt your back: Don't move

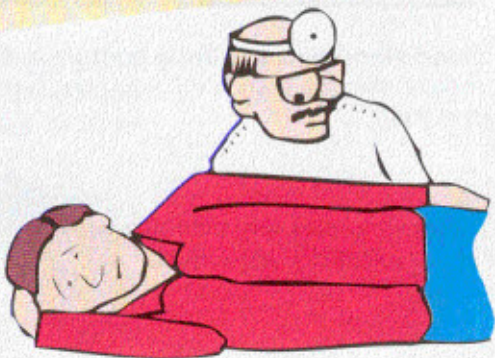


**Rest until medical help arrives.**

*Back problems can be very serious, and any more moves can make them worse.*



**Get medical attention immediately, and follow instructions to the letter.**





# Learn how to lift safely



**You'll avoid injury and help protect your back—which helps you stand, sit, and move.**

- ☒ Watch your weight; eat moderately and diet sensibly.
- ☒ Bend your knees—not your back.
- ☒ Exercise to strengthen muscles and improve flexibility.
- ☒ Plan each lift before you start.
- ☒ Let your legs, not your back, power your lifting.
- ☒ Lift smoothly—don't twist while lifting.
- ☒ Don't overdo it. Get help with loads that are too heavy or awkward for you to move comfortably.



# Test Your Lifting Safety Knowledge

## QUIZ

**Directions:** Complete each of the following statements.  
Write your answers on the lines.



1. Back injuries, often from poor \_\_\_\_\_, are the most common type of serious occupational injury.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ can occur from working unused muscles too hard or lifting incorrectly.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a major cause of injury. If you have to change direction, move your feet first.
4. When lifting or lowering from a high place, stand on a \_\_\_\_\_ instead of a ladder.
5. If a load is too heavy, get help or use a special \_\_\_\_\_.
6. A two-person lift works best if both people are about the same \_\_\_\_\_.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ before you lift.  
Bend or stretch gently to get ready.
8. Safe lifting needs back, stomach, and \_\_\_\_\_ muscles that can handle the job.
9. Check with your \_\_\_\_\_ before starting any exercise program.
10. If you hurt your back, don't \_\_\_\_\_.  
Rest until medical help arrives.

Employee Name \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**For the correct answers, turn this page upside down.**

1. lifting techniques 2. strains; sprains 3. Twisting 4. platform  
5. mechanical device 6. height 7. Warm up 8. leg 9. doctor 10. move