

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

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AVOIDING BACK STRAINS



Each year over a million workers suffer back injuries. They account for twenty percent of workplace injuries and illnesses and twenty-five percent of workers compensation claims.

Critical Safety Points

To avoid back strain, you **must not be casual** about any lifting you do. Before lifting any object run through this list of five questions in your mind:

- **Have I checked the object before trying to lift it?**

Test every load before you lift by pushing the object lightly with your hands or feet to see how easily it moves. This tells you about how heavy it is. Remember, a small size doesn't always mean a light load.

- **Is the load packed correctly?**

Make sure the weight is balanced and packed so it won't move around. Loose pieces inside a box can cause accidents if the box becomes unbalanced.

- **Is it easy to grip this load?**

Be sure you have a tight grip on the object before you lift it. Handles or straps applied to the object may help you lift it safely.

- **Is it easy to reach this load?**

Rather than reach over your head to get a load, use a ladder or lift to get to it more easily. Get as close as you can to the load. Slide the load towards you if you can. Don't arch your back, and avoid reaching out for the object. Do the work with your legs and your arms—not your back.

- **What's the best way to pick up this object?**

Always ask this question before a lift! Use slow and smooth movements. Face the object while lifting. Twisting can hurt your back. Keep the load close to your body. Reaching out to lift and carry an object may hurt your back. Lift with your legs: bend your knees, not your back. Keep your back straight. Try to carry the load in the space between your shoulders and your waist. This reduces strain on your back.

Quiz

Take this quick true or false quiz to gauge your knowledge on safe lifting and avoiding back strains.

1. Careless lifting causes so many injuries that there should be no such thing as a casual lift. T / F
2. No matter what the size of an object, you should always test its weight by pushing it with your hands or feet. T / F
3. If materials are packed in a sturdy box, there should be no danger it lifting it. T / F
4. If it's difficult to grip a load, you should consider applying handles or straps. T / F
5. There's no danger in reaching over your head to lift something because you don't have to bend your back. T / F
6. To get an especially heavy load up off the floor, you may have to begin your lift with a quick, jerking motion. T / F
7. Always keep a load close to your body. T / F
8. You should always lift with your arms and legs, not your back. T / F



Answers
1. True
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. False
7. True
8. True

Source

. *Safety Toolbox Talks*. Springfield: Business 21 Publishing, 2009. 69-70. Print.

Contact Us

(707) 428-1830

Suzanne Dillman

Jeremy Hatch

Amanda Quiralte

SuzanneD@nbsia.org

JeremyH@nbsia.org

AmandaQ@nbsia.org

