



# Toolbox Talks

## Lifting Safety Part 1

Each day, in some form or fashion, you do lifting in this facility & at home. Lifting safely is one the most important things you can do to protect your back throughout your lifetime.

### Lifting "Do's":

- Before you begin, know the right way to do the job.
- Check with your supervisor or co-worker if you have any questions about moving a load.
- Always size up the load.
- Get help for heavy or bulky objects. Inspect your path of travel.
- Be aware of stairs & tripping or slipping hazards.
- Choose the safest route.
- Be sure of a safe, firm grip.
- Check for sharp edges.
- If the load is wet or slippery, wipe it off.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Squat down close to the load; keep your back straight; lift slowly with leg power.
- Use material handling equipment whenever possible. When properly used, it can save a lot of manual effort.

### Lifting "Dont's"

- Avoid heavy, manual jobs if you have had previous back injuries, are underweight or overweight, or have a special medical problem such as a weak heart or high blood pressure.
- Never lift more than you can easily handle.
- Never lift with a rounded back & straight legs.
- Avoid twisting your body when lifting or carrying.
- Move your feet to change direction.
- Never lift from an unbalanced position. This means no lifting from one knee or reaching over another object to lift.
- Never carry a load that blocks your view ahead.

### • **Lifting Properly: Make your Legs do the work, not your back!**

- Stand close to the load with feet shoulder width apart & firmly on the floor.
- Bend at the hips & knees & squat close to the load; keep your back straight.
- Grip the load firmly with both hands, not just your fingers.
- Bring the load close to your body, keeping your weight centered over your feet.
- Stand slowly with your back straight & let your legs push you up.

### • **Carrying Properly:**

- Carry the load waist high.
- Be sure you have a good grip & can see where you're going.
- Walk slowly, taking small steps.
- Stop along the way to rest if you need it.
- Move your feet to turn direction.
- Don't twist! That's a major cause of injury.

### • **2 Person Lifting Safety:**

- Work with a person about your height.
- Decide in advance which person will direct the move.
- Keeping knees bent & back straight, lift & raise the load together.
- Move smoothly together as you carry, keeping the load at the same level.
- Unload at the same time, keeping knees bent.
- If moving something up or down stairs, the taller person should be at the lower level.

### • **Lifting Awkward Shaped Objects: Many people get injured trying to handle the awkward shaped, awkward sized or awkwardly weighted objects.**

- Squat next to the object, with your feet spread shoulder width apart.
- Grip the object at the top outside corner & the bottom inside corner.
- Lift properly & slowly, with knees bent & back straight

### • **Lifting From Hard To Get At Locations:**

- Stand as close as possible to the object.
- Bend forward slightly at the hips, & push your buttocks out behind you.
- Bend your knees, keeping your back straight & stomach muscles tight.
- Grip the object firmly.
- Lift so your leg, stomach, & buttock muscles do the work—not your back.



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## Lifting Safety Part 2

The key to back care lies with the individual worker. Everyone should be a back care "expert" & be able to answer the following questions.

### Lifting & Back Q&A Part 1

**Q:** What's the most important lifting rule to remember?

**A:** Keep The Load Close! There are many other lifting rules, like "bend your knees & lift with your legs," but you can't do this in every situation. Research has also shown that leg muscles become fatigued when frequent lifts are required, so other techniques must be used as well.

**Q:** If you don't hold a load close to your body, how much heavier is the "experienced" weight than the actual weight?

**A:** Ten times as heavy! The back operates as a simple lever, with the fulcrum in the lower back. Back muscles serve as the power arm; the load being lifted is the weight arm, & a 10-1 lever ratio exists in the lower back. The further away you hold the load, the "heavier" it is.

**Q:** Why never twist with a load?

**A:** Lumbar (lower back) vertebrae, disks & joints are under the most vertical pressure when lifting a load. Twisting with a load creates a "shearing" effect on these tissues. The more "mileage" you have on your back, the less forgiving it will be under this pressure.

All information found on [www.safetytoolboxtalks.com](http://www.safetytoolboxtalks.com)

### Lifting & Back Q&A Part 2

**Q:** Which muscles are most important for keeping the spine in its strong S-shaped curve?

**A:** Abdominal muscles, which work in cooperation with back muscles to support your spine. The trouble is, abdominals tend to weaken over time. It helps to tighten them during a heavy lift, but more importantly, keep them in good shape.

**Q:** How can stress in your life effect back pain?

**A:** Whether you're aware of it or not, emotional stress can tighten muscles. Often, fatigued back muscles are the most effected & the first to feel it. It's been said that back ache is just a tension headache that "slipped."

**Q:** What time of the day are back strains most likely to happen?

**A:** In the morning, or at the beginning of a work shift, when muscles aren't "warmed up." Trends also show an increase following the lunch hour, perhaps because blood circulation is in the stomach, instead of the large muscles, & because people may be sleepy & inattentive then.

**Q:** How does keeping flexible help prevent back & muscle strains?

**A:** Muscles tend to shorten when not used to their full capacity. Flexible muscles are less likely to be strained & injured than "tight" muscles, when sudden or heavy power is required. Pre-work stretching programs are very successful in preventing back & muscle strains through many industries. Take a tip from professional athletes--they warm up before a game! Even five minutes helps!