

Back Safety – Proper Lifting

Of all the human body parts, the back is one of the most susceptible to work-related injuries. It is put at risk in physically demanding jobs, but even workers who sit in a chair all day must take care to avoid straining and damaging their backs. By adopting good habits and understanding certain principles of human anatomy, you can avoid the all-too-common problem of work-related back pain.

Avoid “awkward positions” such as bending, over-reaching, and twisting, which put excessive strain on your back. Raise bins and containers from the floor to reduce bending and over-reaching. Use steady, adjustable platforms to easily reach items stored overhead. Squat instead of bend, using knee pads if kneeling. Position your work below the shoulder and above the knees to minimize over-reaching. Push, rather than pull, to maintain the spine’s natural curve.

Stretch and straighten out before your work. Pause often to do the same during your work schedule.



Get as close to the load as possible. Objects become relatively heavier the farther away they are located from the body’s center. Lifting such objects creates excessive strain on the back.

Keep your back straight.

Tighten your stomach muscles, which helps keep your spine from twisting

Stay in good physical condition. A protruding stomach creates an extra load, putting additional weight on the spine.

Avoid staying in a fixed position (i.e., not moving enough) for too long because it can lead to muscle spasms. This will initially be felt as stiffness, but it can lead to tissue damage. Take stretch breaks often.

If a load is too heavy or cumbersome, do not attempt to lift or move it yourself. Get assistance from others.

Stress and fatigue can cause muscles to tighten. To relieve this tension, sleep regularly and for a long enough period of time. Also, consider using breathing exercises, such as diaphragmatic breathing, to relax during your work schedule.

This fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice

For additional information on this topic please contact ACWA JPIA Risk Control Department, Terry Lofing, Administrative Assistant (tlofing@acwajpia.com) or 800-231-5742