

Preventing Back Injuries



Back injuries are the nation's number one workplace safety problem. UNCG records approximately 16 back injuries annually. Often these injuries are extremely painful and result in long-lasting disability and loss of work.

What You Can Do

A number of solutions can be used to reduce the risk of back injuries. This training module will review a number of these solutions that have been shown to reduce back strain and injuries.

No doubt you have heard about proper lifting techniques, however this module would like to go into them in detail and will offer you specific suggestions when lifting common workplace items. First let's look at the steps when lifting an object.



Prepare for the Lift

- 1) Check the entire path you plan to take when lifting the item.
- 2) Make sure you are wearing shoes that give you good balance, even support across the sole and most of all traction.



Know What You're About to Pick-up

- 3) Know the weight of the object by reading the label or cautiously hefting to check the weight and center of gravity and best place to grab the item.



Lift the Object

- 4) Face the object directly and get your body as close as you can to the item you plan to lift.
- 5) Place your feet apart slightly.
- 6) Squat down, bending your knees. Place one knee and foot slightly behind you if it will give you more power.
- 7) Grip the object firmly.
- 8) Straighten your back and tighten your stomach muscles.



Lift With Your Legs, NOT Your Back

- 9) Use your legs to move to a standing position. Keeping your back straight as you move to a standing position.
- 10) Use your large thigh muscles to lift the load, instead of bending your back and placing stress on the lower back muscles, which tend to be weaker.



Carry the Load

- 11) Continue to grip the load firmly and hold it as close as you can to your body.
- 12) Keep your back straight.
- 13) Keep your stomach muscles tight.



Setting Down the Load



- 14) Face the place where you will be lowering the load straight ahead.
- 15) Keep the back straight and stomach tight.
- 16) Spread the feet wider apart.
- 17) Slowly bend your knees until you are in a squat position.



- 18) Remember to keep the load close to the body.
- 19) Lower the object to the floor or shelf.

Alternatives to Lifting

Ask a co-worker to help move the object.



Use a hand-cart or pushcart to move the load.

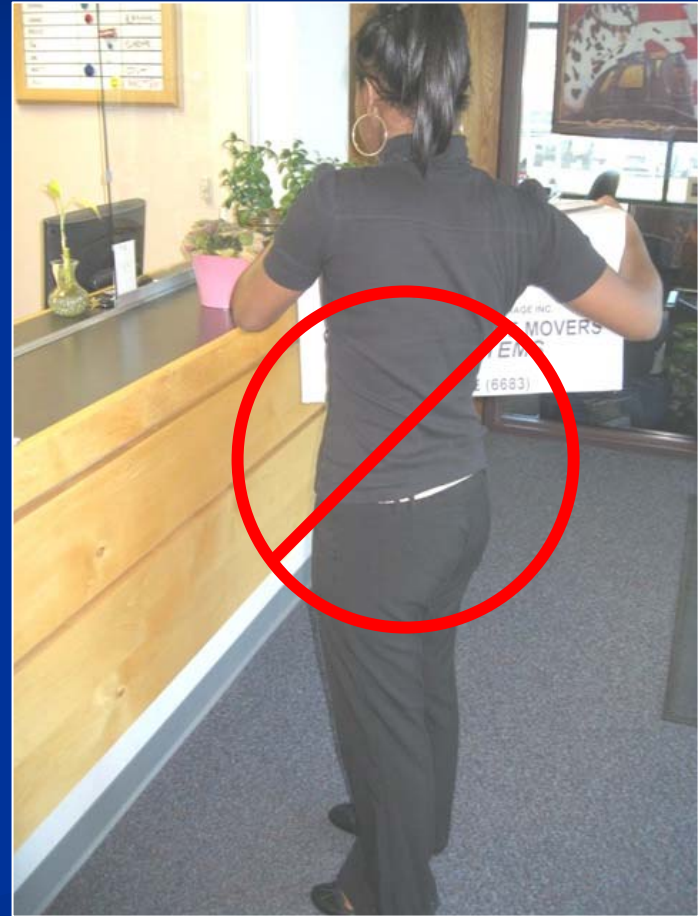


Do NOT...

DO NOT TWIST when

- picking up,
- walking, or
- depositing the load.

The twisting motion puts high pressure on the weakest muscles in the back and is most often the cause of back injuries while lifting.



Additional Ways To Prevent Back Injuries

- Maintain good posture, when standing and sitting.
- Keep within your recommended weight range.
- Exercise regularly. Walking, bicycling and swimming are all great activities that can strengthen lower back muscles and soft stomach muscles.

