



Back Away from Unsafe Lifting Practices

Safety Talk Kit

LIFT IN THE POWER ZONE AVOID BACK INJURY



1

Line up body and head straight in front of object. Bend knees.

2

Grasp object close to body in "Power Zone" (mid-thigh to mid-chest).

3

Lift with knees. Avoid twisting.

Safety Talk Handout

Back Away from Unsafe Lifting Practices

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Did you know that within a three-month period 25 percent of adults suffer at least one day of back pain? According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), most adults experience their first episodes of low back pain in their 30s and as people age back pain becomes more common.

Another risk factor for back problems is being physically unfit. People with weak back

and abdominal muscles are much more likely to suffer back injuries.

WHAT'S THE Danger

Any job that requires heavy lifting, pushing or pulling of objects can lead to back injury, especially among workers who aren't physically fit, have poor posture and are not lifting in a safe manner.

While a back injury won't kill you, it can be-

come a chronic problem that could force you to leave your job.

EXAMPLE

A nurse at a care home suffers a back injury while moving a patient out of a bed. Normally, two nurses work together to move patients but the facility is short-staffed that day because of other nurses being sick at home.

The pain is so terrible that she falls to the floor and cannot get up. She's taken to hospital and is diagnosed with a slipped disc. She is medically unable to return to her job.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

In order to prevent back injury, the spine must not be stressed and should be kept in a neutral position. One of the biggest mistakes workers make while lifting is not keeping their backs straight and using their leg muscles to propel the load upward. Instead, they bend over and use their back muscles, not their leg muscles, to lift the object.

If you bend over to lift an object weighing 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms, you are actually putting 1,150 pounds or 552 kilograms of pressure on your lower back. Even bending over at the waist to pick up a piece of paper can strain your back.

Twisting at the hips while lifting, instead of using your legs to turn your entire body, makes a bad situation even worse.

Here are some tips for correct lifting:

- Before lifting an object, size it up to make sure it isn't too heavy for you to lift it alone. Test the weight by bending at the knees and picking up one corner of the load. Also ensure that the size and shape of the object are manageable. If a load is awkward, it doesn't need to be heavy to strain your back. If the load is

so large that it blocks your vision, you could easily injure yourself or others. Ensure that your walking path is not blocked by debris, equipment or other workers.

- If you need help lifting, ask a co-worker to assist you or go get a hand-truck, dolly or other lifting device.
- If you know you can lift the object safely by yourself, position your body directly in front of the object, getting as close to it as possible.
- Stand with your feet at shoulder width and tighten your stomach muscles.
- Bend at your hips and knees and squat down close to the object, keeping your back straight.
- Lift the object with your hands and bring it close to your body.
- Looking straight ahead, use your leg muscles to propel the load upward and bring yourself to a standing position and carry the load where it is needed. Remember not to twist your upper body when setting the object down. If you must move sideways, turn your entire body.
- If you must lift an object more than once, try to place it down on a countertop or table, so that it can be moved from a standing position.

FINAL WORD

Lifting is a situation that requires you to first use your brain before employing your brawn, if you want to avoid injury. Lifting even a light load the wrong way can result in a painful back injury.

Safety Talk Quiz

Back Away from Unsafe Lifting Practices

1. The risk of a back injury decreases with age.

True or False

2. Weak abdominal and back muscles increase one's odds of suffering a back injury.

True or False

3. Bending over and lifting a 10-pound object places how many pounds of pressure on the lower back?

- a. 10 pounds
- b. 110 pounds
- c. 1,150 pounds
- d. 11,000 pounds

4. When taking any form of medication, what should you carry with you at all times?

5. If an object is too heavy for one person to lift or is shaped awkwardly, you should

6. If an object is going to need to be lifted more than once, you should set it down at waist level to prevent the need for lifting it from ground level a second time.

True or False

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Heavy lifting is part of your job. Many of your co-workers pride themselves on being able to lift super-heavy items without asking for help. But you sometimes find yourself straining to carry heavy items and are afraid you are going to drop something. There's no getting around the fact you need to ask for lifting help sometimes. How would you deal with this problem?

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Safety Talk Leader Sheet

Back Away from Unsafe Lifting Practices

BEFORE THE TALK

7 Preparation Tips

1. Observe your workers lifting objects. Are they doing it correctly or are you seeing some back straining activities taking place? If so, without naming names, plan to point out some of the poor lifting practices during your safety meeting.
2. Are lifting aids such as dollies and carts readily available for workers' use? If not, you need to request that some of these items be purchased.
3. Are work stations designed to reduce the need for employees to lift objects from the floor? If not, consider what improvements can be made.
4. Lifting improperly is a major source of back injuries, but workers who move carts improperly also risk injury. Carts should be pushed, not pulled and they should not be overloaded or piled so high with materials that they block the vision of the worker handling a cart.
5. At your meeting, throw a wad of paper on the floor and ask for a volunteer to demonstrate the proper way of picking it up.
6. Consider inviting a fitness expert in to talk about how getting into shape can reduce a person's odds of suffering a back injury.
7. Check for tight areas where workers carrying objects might need to twist their bodies to avoid contacting machinery or other objects. If you spot such areas, see how they might be reconfigured to create more room.

Remind workers to always read the label to see how to take the medicine, and if it should be taken with food or on an empty stomach.

- For information on a variety of safety topics, check out Bongarde's online network for safety professionals at <http://www.SafetyXChange.org>
- If you want the latest in job safety news, tips and photos, sign up for Bongarde Safety Briefing at <http://www.Bongarde.com>.

AFTER THE TALK

Checklist

- Provided extra training to workers who did poorly on quiz Date: _____
- Observed workers Date: _____
- Refresher training Date: _____
- Other (describe) _____

Date: _____ Location: _____ Meeting By: _____

Safety Talk Power Point

Back Away from Unsafe Lifting Practices

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Print out and use this script to read aloud with your presentation, or use it as a guide for changing slides while listening to the presentation.

WHAT'S AT STAKE (SLIDE 1)

1. Within a three month period
2. At least one day of back pain
3. First episodes of low back pain in their 30s
4. As people age back pain becomes more common
5. Another risk factor
6. Being physically unfit
7. More likely to suffer back injuries

WHAT'S THE DANGER (SLIDE 2)

1. Heavy lifting, pushing or pulling of objects
2. Can lead to back injury
3. Aren't physically fit
4. Have poor posture
5. Not lifting in a safe manner
6. Can become a chronic problem
7. Could force you to leave your job

EXAMPLE (SLIDE 3)

1. Nurse at a care home suffers a back injury
2. Moving a patient out of a bed

3. Pain is so terrible
4. Falls on the floor and cannot get up
5. Diagnosed with a slipped disc
6. Medically unable to return to her job

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF (SIDE 4)

1. Prevent back injury
2. Spine must not be stressed
3. Kept in a neutral position
4. Keeping their backs straight
5. Using their leg muscles to propel the load

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF (SIDE 5)

1. If you bend over to lift an object
2. Pressure on your lower back
3. Bending over at the waist
4. Can strain your back
5. Twisting at the hips while lifting
6. Makes a bad situation even worse

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF (SIDE 6)

Tips for correct lifting:

1. Before lifting an object, size it up
2. Isn't too heavy for you to lift
3. Size and shape of the object are manageable
4. Doesn't need to be heavy to strain your back
5. Ensure that your walking path is not blocked

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF (SLIDE 7)

Tips for correct lifting:

1. Need help lifting, ask a co-worker
2. Get a hand-truck, dolly or other lifting device
3. Lift the object safely by yourself
4. Body directly in front of the object
5. As close to it as possible

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF (SLIDE 8)

Tips for correct lifting:

1. Feet at shoulder width
2. Tighten your stomach muscles
3. Bend at your hips and knees
4. Squat down close to the object
5. Keeping your back straight
6. Lift the object with your hands
7. Bring it close to your body

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF (SLIDE 9)

Tips for correct lifting:

- Use your leg muscles
- Bring yourself to a standing position
- Remember not to twist
- Turn your entire body
- Lift an object more than once
- Place it down on a countertop or table
- Moved from a standing position

FINAL WORD

Lifting is a situation that requires you to first use your brain before employing your brawn, if you want to avoid injury.

Lifting even a light load the wrong way can result in a painful back injury.

