



Loss Control Insights

Manual Material Handling Guidelines

The best way to avoid back injuries is to:

- Eliminate lifts whenever possible.
- Use mechanical lifting equipment when available, such as a hoist, dolly or hand cart.

If you have to manually handle material you should:



1. **Size up the load:** Take a few seconds to stop and think about how heavy is it, how you are going to handle the load, where you are going to move it, is it within your physical capability to safely handle it, and do you have enough room to lift it?

2. **Insure that the path is clear, with ample room to maneuver and good footing:** Carrying an object is hard enough - you should not have to worry about tripping over electrical cords, boxes, or other materials in your pathway. Make sure the floor is reasonably clean and not slippery or wear appropriate footwear that will provide you with extra slip resistance.

3. **Lift comfortably and smoothly:** Do not jerk the load from a resting position into a carrying position. The sudden loading on your spine, shoulders, and arms can cause injury. Use your leg muscles to help lift the load smoothly and comfortably. Choose the position that feels best to you.

4. **Ideally, keep all loads between knuckle and shoulder height:** It is best to try to keep the lifting and carry activities in a

posture where the load is between your shoulders and the height of your knuckles when your arms are hanging at your side.

5. **Avoid twisting and bending while lifting or moving:** Bending and twisting significantly increase the loading on the back. Do not put objects on the floor if they must be picked up later. If you have to move in a different direction, do so by first moving your feet and rotating your whole body in the new direction of travel.
6. **Keep objects close to the body:** The farther a load is carried away from the body, the greater the stress placed on the low back. If you do not believe this, try holding an object at arm's length in front of you and then close to your body. Which is less fatiguing?
7. **Avoid heavy lifts, get help:** If the load looks like more than you can handle, get help either from another person or by using a mechanical lifting/moving aid. If the load can be divided into smaller units that can be safely handled, do so.
8. **Never allow the load to obstruct your view:** If you can't see where you are going, you are more likely to trip and fall. If the load is too big, take it in smaller bites, if possible, or get help so that you (and your lifting partner if needed) can see where you are headed.
9. **If handles are provided on the load, use them:** Handles allow you to grasp the load with a power grip and help provide additional stability when lifting or moving the load.