

# Avoid Back Attack

## Back Safety Training

### What leads to back injuries?

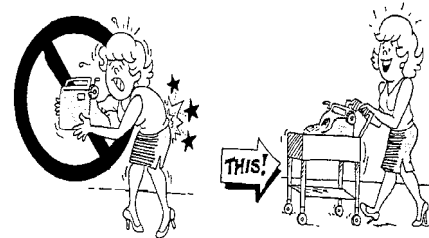
- Lifting excessive weight
- Using poor lifting technique such as bending over at waist or twisting with loads
- Reaching overhead for elevated loads
- Carrying awkwardly-shaped objects
- Sitting or standing too long in one position for extended periods of time
- Working in awkward positions for extended periods of time
- *Contributing factors:* poor physical condition, extra weight, and poor posture

### What are the most common types of back injuries?

- Muscle & ligament strains & sprains
- Muscle spasms
- Herniated, ruptured or slipped discs
- Degenerative discs

### How can back injuries be prevented?

- Avoid lifting and bending where possible
- Use carts and dollies where possible
- Ask for help with heavy loads
- Always use proper lifting techniques
- Stretch before lifting
- Avoid prolonged sitting or standing for extended periods of time
- Avoid lifting loads above shoulders where possible
- Slow down during heavy, repetitive lifting and take rest breaks
- Sleep on a firm mattress, get in shape, and use good posture



## Anatomy of a Safe Lift

Safe lifting is as simple as one, two, three

When you lift an object, your backbone must support your weight as well as the weight of the object you're lifting. That puts extra strain on your spine. By using proper body mechanics, the muscles in your back and abdomen, buttocks, and thighs all work together to support your spine and prevent injury.

Here's how to lift safely in three easy steps:

- 1. Assume the safe lifting position.** Stand close to the object with a wide stance. Keep your feet turned out and your heels down. Squat by bending at the hips and knees so that your ears, shoulders, and hips form a nearly straight line.
- 2. Prepare to lift.** Pull the load close to your body, which reduces pressure on your back, and grasp the object firmly. Tighten your stomach muscles.
- 3. Let your legs do the lifting.** Maintaining the natural curves of your spine, rise from the squatting position by using your legs to power the lift. Do not bend over at the neck, shoulders, or waist as you lift.

When you lower the load, face the spot you've chosen and lower the load slowly—again by using your legs, not your back. Bend your knees and lower your body with the load, keeping your back comfortably straight.

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### Tips for Working and Moving Safely

Prevent back strain and pain by sitting, standing, driving, working, and moving in ways that do not injure your back.

- ⇒ **Standing:** Stand tall and straight, but not stiff. When you stand, hold your shoulders even and back. Keep your head up and your pelvis forward. If you have to stand in one place for a while, keep one foot raised on a step or other elevation. Shift feet every so often.
- ⇒ **Driving:** Drive with your back straight, and knees bent. Be careful getting in and out of your vehicle.
- ⇒ **Sitting:** Sit up straight, close to the desk or worktable, with your back against the chair back. Turn your whole body to reach something to the side; don't twist. Don't sit too long at a time. Get up, stretch, and walk around.
- ⇒ **Working low to the ground:** Bend your knees and keep your back as straight as possible. Avoid bending from the waist.
- ⇒ **Working on you back:** Choose a position that keeps your back flat and knees bent. Don't stay in one position too long. Get up and stretch.
- ⇒ **Shoveling:** Shovel so your legs do the lifting, not your back. The best position is to have your hands far apart, legs bent at the knees, and back straight.
- ⇒ **Getting down from heights:** Never jump. Even a jump from a short height, such as a loading dock, can cause a back injury. Use a ladder or steps.



**If you experience serious back pain while working, stop what you are doing!**