

LIFTING GUIDELINES

Have you ever had a stiff, nagging pain in your back? If you haven't, you may be one of a lucky few, or should we say you must be doing something right. Since the back is more fragile than you would expect, and it is the center of our structural support, it is one of the very most important body areas to protect. Before initiating any lift you should review a "mental checklist".

Rules of Good Body Mechanics

1. **Test the load.** Prior to lifting or moving an object, test the weight of the load to make sure it can be moved safely. Get help if you need it. Use a lift assist device.
2. **Plan the move.** Check the path of travel or destination of the load to make sure it is clear. Clear the path before picking up the load.
3. **Use a wide, balanced stance with one foot ahead of the other.** A solid base of support reduces the likelihood of slipping and jerking movements.
4. **Keep the lower back in its normal arched position while lifting.** Bend at the knees or hips. With the back arched, the forces are more evenly distributed on the support structures.
5. **Bring the load as close to the body as possible.** This keeps your back from acting as the fulcrum and reduces the stress.
6. **Keep the head and shoulders up as the lifting motion begins.** This helps to keep the arch in the lower back.
7. **Tighten the stomach muscles as the lift begins.** This causes the abdominal cavity to become a weight bearing structure, thus unloading the spine.
8. **Lift with the legs and stand up in a smooth, even motion.** Using the strength of the legs to straighten the knees and hips as the lift is completed, decreases the lower back stress.
9. **Move the feet (pivot) if a direction change is necessary.** This eliminates the need to twist at the waist, thus significantly reducing the stress on the supporting structure of the back.
10. **Communicate if two or more individuals are involved in the movement.** This reduces the likelihood of an error, which could result in sudden or jerking movement.

