

Whether at home or work, lifting is part of our daily actions. Unfortunately, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Teaching proper lifting techniques and modifying tasks to eliminate or reduce the physical demands of lifting can dramatically reduce the risk of injury. The following strategies can help any organization reduce back injuries.

Eliminate or Reduce Manual Lifting Demands

- Use mechanical lifting devices (e.g., hoists or lift tables), especially for heavy loads.
- Use material handling devices (e.g., carts or dollies) to transport materials rather than carrying.
- Store manually-lifted items off the floor, with especially heavy objects stored above knee height, but less than shoulder height.
- Use smaller totes or bins, limiting weight to 25 lbs. or less.
- Design tasks to avoid reaching, twisting and lifting with arms extended.

Posture Matters

- Keep your back straight by keeping your head up and facing forward.
- Avoid lifting with your head down or with an arched back, which places extra strain on your lower back.
- Lift in the “power zone” whenever possible—near waist level with your hands close to your body.
- Move your feet instead of twisting when turning with a load.



Proper Lifting Techniques

- Approach the corner of the load with a wide, staggered stance for better balance and power.
- Plan ahead by testing the weight of the load (e.g., lift a corner of the load).
- Make sure the path to your destination is free from obstructions.
- Wear gloves as appropriate to protect your hands from sharp edges and/or to provide a sure grip.
- Get help when lifting objects you feel are too heavy or awkward to lift by yourself.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Lift with a smooth deliberate motion—don’t jerk or fling the load.

For Additional Information

EMC Insurance Companies: www.emcins.com

- Safety by Topic – Ergonomics and Back Safety

