

SAFE LIFTING

If you have ever suffered from back pain, you understand how debilitating it can be. Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one, and proper lifting is the key to prevention.

Steps for Proper Lifting

1. Assess the load. Ask yourself:

- Is mechanical help needed and/or available?
- Can I lift this alone?
- Can I divide the load to make it lighter and less cumbersome?

2. Assess your surrounding environment. Ask yourself:

- Is the path clear?
- Is my footing firm?
- What's my destination? Is there a place to set something down?

TIPS

- * If you are assisting someone, make sure that the person is ready for your assistance. Whenever possible, position yourself in a manner that prevents you from having to lean or reach across someone, and approach from the side rather than the front.
- * If you ask for help, make sure to communicate with the person helping you. Lift on a signal that is determined prior to beginning the lift.

3. Prepare to lift.

- Tuck your pelvis by tightening your stomach muscles, which will help keep your back in balance when you lift. Tucking in your chin also helps you remember to keep your back straight.
- Stand close to the load with your feet shoulder-width apart. Using a wide stance helps to stabilize your body.
- Squat down, bending at the hip and the knee—NOT at the waist or back. This helps keep your center of balance and allows the strong muscles to do the lifting.
- Hug the load. Keep your arms and elbows close to your body. Holding the object close to you puts less pressure on your body.
- Slowly lift by straightening your legs. Avoid twisting, which can overload your spine and lead to injury. Make sure your feet, knees, and torso are pointed in the same direction while lifting.
- Remember to breathe. If you must hold your breath, the object you're lifting is too heavy.

Use the same steps when setting the load down.



DID YOU KNOW?

- According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, over **80% of people will suffer from a back injury** in their lifetime that requires medical attention.
- A study done by the National Safety Council showed that back injuries are the **second leading cause of lost work time**, beat out only by the common cold. Back injuries also constitute one of the most common reasons for people to visit the emergency room or doctor's office.
- Objects held at arm's length weigh the equivalent of 10 times more than the objects actual weight!



GIVE YOUR BACK A BREAK

Use equipment that is available to you, such as mechanical lifts, repositioning devices, gait belts, hand dollies, and ramps.

irwin siegel
agency, Inc.
insurance & risk management
human service programs

Keeping Your Back in Tip-Top Shape

Having a healthy lifestyle is a good start.

- Get plenty of rest, eat right, and exercise to keep the muscles in your back strong and flexible.
- Maintain a healthy weight—being overweight puts added stress on your lower back.
- Avoid smoking—both smoke and nicotine cause your spine to age faster than normal.
- Maintain good posture—proper posture is important for avoiding future back problems.

Check It Out!

Go to www.siegelagency.com or contact our Risk Management Department at 1.800.622.8272 or by email at solutions@siegelagency.com for other safety bulletins and newsletters.

