

SAFE WORK PRACTICE

Safe Lifting

Purpose

To provide guidelines to employees on how to prevent injuries resulting from lifting.

General

Many people need to lift and carry boxes or other heavy objects as part of their job. Improper lifting increases the risk of a workplace injury, particularly in situations where staff perform lifting after sitting for a prolonged period. Staff can reduce lifting related injuries by using safe work practices.

Before you lift

- Following prolonged sitting, spend 5-10 minutes standing or walking to allow your back to return to optimal lifting function (i.e., stretched ligaments to regain joint stiffness and the disc nucleus to equilibrate).
- Assess the weight of the load and if possible reduce the weight by unpacking or otherwise splitting the load.
- Get help with heavy or awkward loads.
- Inspect the load to be sure it is “free” to move.
- Check that the planned location of the load is free of obstacles and debris.
- Do not lift if you are not absolutely sure that you can handle the load safely without overexertion.

Safe lifting tips

- Stand as close as possible to the load and face the way you intend to move.
- Use a wide, staggered stance for good balance.
- Be sure you have a good grip on the load.
- Lightly tighten abdominal and back muscles before you lift.
- Keep normal curvature in your back throughout the lift.
- Lift the load as close to the body as possible.
- Use technique to reduce the actual weight of the object being handled.
- Avoid twisting by keeping your toes and your nose always pointed in the same direction.
- Avoid lifting with one arm and bending sideways at the trunk.
- Do not slide materials on the floor using your feet and legs.