

Most of us forget the importance of our backs for the enjoyment of a normal, happy, and successful life. However, the back contains one of the most critical muscle groups in the body, as well as the spinal cord and associated vertebrae and disks. Everyone working in the building industry must lift materials. Back injuries are often cumulative; a lot of small injuries lead up to the big one. Remember the key elements of proper lifting.

Preparing to Lift

Is the area clear of tripping hazards, anything that could create a problem with your footing? Make sure you have a clear walkway before you start a lift.

Have a supervisor or a competent worker demonstrate the proper method of bending and lifting.

Do you need help? Get help if needed (more people, lift equipment, etc.)

Size up the load before you lift. Test by lifting one of the corners or pushing. If it is heavy or feels too clumsy, get help from another worker. **When in doubt, do not lift alone!**

Try to have the material or equipment be placed closer to where it needs to be installed.

Do you need to stretch before preparing to lift?

Determine your own load capacity.

Determine your ability to handle the size of the load.

Wear safe shoes.

Wear gloves to protect your hands and grip if the surface is rough.

Proper Lifting Techniques are Necessary to Prevent Back Injuries:

- Make sure your grip is secure and your lifting motion is unobstructed.
- **Bend your knees**, keeping your back as straight as possible when raising or lowering the object
- Lift smoothly and straight up. Let your legs do the work, not your back!
- **Do not twist your body** when lifting an object.
- Do not lift heavy objects above or away from your body.
- Use mechanical lifting devices whenever possible.

Some Steps to Prevent Back Problems:

- **Stretching** your legs and back is imperative prior to lifting any objects.
- If you are sitting for extended periods, get up and stretch periodically.
- If your back is sore, ice the sore area
- Walking for extended periods can help to keep back muscles loose and posture straight.

Remember: The only thing you will prove by lifting more than you should is that your back is a poor substitute for a forklift. Think before you lift—every time!!

[Lifting Poster](#)
[Stretch and Flex Poster](#)