



Monthly Spotlight

Date: August 2009

Back injuries are one of the most common injuries found throughout the University and in industry. With this Month's Spotlight we will address proper lifting techniques, how to reduce the risk of a back injury and some other general safety tips.

Preparation:

- Ensure that you are wearing proper clothing and PPE
 - Safety toe shoes should always be worn when lifting heavy items
 - Gloves are also recommended when lifting certain objects
- Stretch at the beginning of your shift and before you attempt to lift a heavy object
- If possible, store materials at waist height to reduce the strain on your back
- Have materials delivered as close to final destination as possible
- Know your own lifting restrictions and capabilities
- Assess the object you are going to be lifting
 - Determine the weight of the object before lifting
 - Determine best place to grip the object
- Ensure that your travel path is free of slipping and tripping hazards

Get Help:

- Use carts, dollies, forklifts and hoists to move materials
- When lifting a load more than 50 lbs, get help from another worker
- Use carrying tools with handles to carry odd-shaped loads

Proper Lifting Techniques:

- Have your feet spread about shoulders-width apart
- Your feet should be close to the object
- Get a firm grip on the object
- Keep your back straight and elbows close to your body
- Keeping your back straight and head up, straighten your legs to lift object
- At the same time tighten your stomach muscles to provide back support (Don't hold your breath while doing this)
- While carrying the object DO NOT twist or bend at the waist, move your feet and legs when turning
- Keep the load as close to your body as possible
- To set the object down, use the same technique used to lift the object

Other Useful Safety Tips:

- Take your time! You are more likely to be injured when you are tired or cold
- Lift as smoothly as possible, try not to "jerk" the lift

Group Discussion Topics:

- Has anyone had a back injury? How could this have been prevented?
- Are there common objects which you find yourself lifting frequently? Do you have specific procedures for lifting these objects?
- Do you have access to material handling equipment? If no, can you obtain them?