



PS Safety & Risk Management, LLC

Providing Safety Solutions for Today's Needs

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Using Your Head can Save Your Back

Of 900,000 disabling back injuries that occur each year in the United States, more than half result from trying to lift objects.

The National Safety Council (NSC) says that since lifting and carrying are “power jobs,” it’s easy for back damage to occur. Once it does, it can take a long time for the person to return to normal activities, including working.

Most of us ignore our backs until they give us a painful reminder of our carelessness. People who take care of their backs are far less likely to run into problems.

The NSC says power warm-ups –slow stretches before starting each shift – will help workers ease into their workday and avoid back strain.

Warm-up exercises include:

The leg and back warm-up: Prop one foot on a chair or stool for support. Take a deep breath. Ease forward slowly, keeping your back slightly curved. Blow slowly outward as you ease forward to a seven count. Repeat seven times. Switch and do the same with your other foot.

Backbend: Stand with your feet about 12 inches (30 centimeters) apart. Support the small of your back with your hands. Hold your stomach in firmly and take a deep breath. Arch backward, bending your head and neck as you go and blowing air out slowly to a count of seven. Repeat seven times.

Then:

Size up the load: tip it on its side to see if you can carry it comfortably alone. Get help if the load is too big or awkward. Check for nails, splinters, rough strapping and sharp edges.

Lift it right:

1. Ensure your footing is solid.
2. Keep your back straight, with no curving or slouching.
3. Center your body over your feet, get a firm grip on the object and pull it close to you.

4. Pull your stomach in firmly. Lift with your legs, not your back. If you need to turn, move your feet. **Don't twist your back.**

- Do not try to carry an oversized load alone. Ask for help and work as a team by lifting, walking and lowering the load together.
- Let one person direct the lift.
- Use proper mechanical devices for heavy loads.
- For high loads, use a step stool or sturdy ladder to reach loads above your shoulders.
 - Get as close to the load as possible and slide it toward you. Do all the work with your arms and legs, not your back.
- For low loads, such as those under racks and cabinets, pull the load toward you. Then try to support it on one knee before you lift. Use your legs to power the lift.
- Always use your stomach as a low back support by pulling it in while lifting.

For more information or training needs, contact **PS Safety & Risk Management, Inc.** at (225) 716-0029 or visit us at www.pssafety.net