

SENSIBLE LIFTING TECHNIQUES

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Injuries often occur as a result of damage that has accumulated over time

Developing good habits

Lifting and carrying (or 'moving and handling') injuries are often attributed to a single handling incident, but they are in fact more likely to occur as a result of minor damage that has accumulated over a period of time. That's why it's really important to develop good handling habits.

Manual handling injuries

Poor techniques for handling objects, including lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, or carrying, can result in the following common injuries:

- Overexertion - usually due to handling a load that is beyond one's capability
- Cumulative - from static postures or repetitive lifting
- An accident - usually as a result of a combination of the above

Body mechanics

When lifting a weight in a stooped position, the leverage on the back increases the force on the muscles by up to 10 times more than the weight of the load. The combination of tension in the muscles and the compression of the spine may result in damage. The further away from the body the weight is held, the greater the stress on the spine.

Tips for lifting and carrying

- Before handling a tricky load, stop and think about whether the task is really necessary.
- Plan your task to avoid twisting and bending.
- Consider the size, weight, shape, texture, temperature and handholds of the load.
- Test the load first if you don't know how much it weighs and break it into smaller loads if need be.

- Hold the load close to your body.
- Feet should point in the direction of movement.
- Ensure a wide, stable base and a good grip.
- Try to keep your back straight.
- Bend your knees as much as you can.
- Don't use jerky movements.
- Put the load down before making adjustments for its final position.
- Break often and stretch if you are doing repetitive handling.
- Never lift anything that you think may be beyond your capability.
- Check for obstacles. Is the floor slippery, is there adequate lighting, what is the temperature and humidity?
- Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

Handling people and animals

Handling animate objects can be tricky. The golden rule is to encourage and allow the time for the person or animal to do as much of the movement as possible themselves. For instance, if your toddler needs a cuddle after a fall, squat down to their level rather than scooping them up. Encourage young children to settle themselves in their car seats as soon as they're able. Many parents injure their backs whilst stooping and twisting to place their child into a car seat.

