



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON LIFTING INJURIES

- 1. What are the chances of injuring my back?**  
Eighty percent of people between the ages of 30 and 50 will suffer a back injury.
- 2. I once woke up and my back was hurt. I have no idea what happened. Is that possible?**  
Some back injuries take a few days for you to feel. You may also have a cumulative trauma injury. In these cases, repeated minor injuries can "add up" damage to equal an obvious bad lifting accident.
- 3. What is cumulative trauma?**  
Cumulative trauma means it happened over a period of time. You can injure your back by lifting, standing, or even sitting incorrectly.
- 4. What are the "rules" of safe lifting?**
  1. Keep your back straight.
  2. Your feet should be about shoulder width with the weight of your body over your feet.
  3. Test the weight of the load.
  4. Bend your legs and tighten stomach muscles so they carry the weight.
  5. Keep your head and shoulders level, don't look up or down.
  6. Hold the load close to your body.
  7. Move the feet (pivot) to change directions.
  8. Communicate if more than one person is involved.
- 5. I lift bulky items frequently. Do the same rules apply?**  
The same basic technique is used to lift all heavy objects:
  - Keep the object close to your body.
  - Keep your back straight, and lift with your legs and tight stomach muscles.
  - When lifting heavy or bulky items, use an assistive device (hand truck or dolly) or team lift with a coworker.
  - It may be dangerous to hug trash bags close to the body. Drag it or use wheels if you can't safely lift the trash bag and carry it away from the body.

**6. I work in tight spaces and twist a lot when I lift. Is that dangerous to my back?**

**Yes.** Twisting while moving stock or shoveling is one of the most common ways people injure their backs. Remember to move your feet (pivot), turning the body as a whole. Don't twist the upper body as a short cut.

**7. What else do I need to know to protect my back?**

- **Think about the way you do your job.** Is there better equipment designed that will protect you? Can you alternate what you do so as not to stress the same muscles?
- **Exercise.** Just 15 minutes of back and neck exercises per day can help prevent injuries. Some basic exercises are included here. Talk to your doctor first if you have a back injury. You will work better if you start each day with slow stretches. These warm-ups let you ease comfortably into your workday and help you avoid injuries.
- **Size up the load before lifting.** Can you carry it comfortably? Get help if the load is too big or bulky for one person. Check for nails, splinters, rough strapping and sharp edges.
- **Lift it right.** Be sure your footing is solid. Keep your back straight, with no curving or slouching. Center your body over your feet, get a good grip on the object and pull it close to you. Pull your stomach in firmly. Lift with your legs, not your back; if you need to turn, move your feet and don't twist your back.