

Loss

Control



FARMERS

Information Bulletin

Lifting

Lifting is involved in every industry and occupation. It does not matter if you are in construction, an office environment, a restaurant, or a service trade, lifting is a part of the job.

Repeated incorrect lifting can result in a variety of injuries. Back strain is the most common injury and results from overstretching muscles. Painful herniated discs in the back can also result from incorrect lifting. Using safe lifting techniques can help reduce the possibility of back injuries.

Safe lifting techniques also increase your potential of maintaining the back's natural posture during the lift. The back forms three natural curves. The first is in the neck, the second in the middle of the back, and the last is in the lower back. Maintaining these curves in your posture while lifting minimizes pressure on the discs and gives the maximum potential lifting strength.

Since no single lifting technique will work in all situations, following the tips below will help avoid back injuries while lifting.

- *Size up the load and decide whether you can handle it alone or if help is needed.*
- *Ask for help if needed to avoid injury.*
- *Check your intended path of travel for obstacles or other hazards.*
- *Place your feet at shoulder's width apart and wear good work shoes.*
- *Bend at the knees – not your waist. Leg muscles are stronger than back muscles. Let your leg muscles do the work.*
- *Grip the load firmly and use work gloves if necessary.*

- *Keep the load close to your body. Greater strength and stability occur with the object near the waist.*
- *Move your feet when you change directions. Do not twist your upper body while carrying or placing the load.*

When the lift requires the assistance of a co-worker, these additional tips should be followed:

- *Determine in advance who is the leader.*
- *Plan the lift together.*
- *Lift and lower in unison and with no sudden moves.*
- *Communicate with your partner during the entire lift and move.*

Back belts or back supports have not proven themselves to be effective in reducing back injuries while lifting. Their use should be with this fact in mind. A back belt should only be used as a reminder of how to keep your back straight and to use your legs when lifting.

Another important factor for safe lifting is a body that is in good physical condition. Poor posture, obesity, lack of exercise, and stress can contribute to back injuries. To reduce your chance of back pain, educate yourself on how the back works and how to keep it healthy and flexible. Ask your health care provider to recommend stretching and conditioning exercises and practice them regularly.

By being alert when lifting and remembering these safety tips, you can reduce your potential of injury while lifting. If you are ever in doubt about a lift, ask your supervisor or get a co-worker to help you.