



# Back Safety

**Back disorders** are listed in the "top ten" leading workplace injuries published by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. They account for 27 percent of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses involving days away from work. Your back is a sophisticated piece of machinery made up of numerous muscles, bones, nerves, and supporting tissues. It's a machine you use every day, probably in ways you don't even notice.

Just like a machine, your back requires proper care to keep it working. If it's not working right, you'll suffer. An injured back affects your ability to move your limbs, your hips, your neck, and your head. Injuries to the back can be very debilitating, causing a lot of pain, time away from work, and often requiring physical therapy or even surgery. Everyone whose job involves stressful lifting or awkward postures is at risk for a back injury. Here are some tips to keep your back in optimum condition:

**Exercise** also plays an important role in keeping your back strong, healthy, and flexible. A properly exercised back is less likely to be injured. Your physician, company medical personnel, or other health-care provider can recommend the best exercises for you, taking into account your physical condition and the type of work you do. Always be alert for situations that could cause a back injury. Be kind to your back. Don't take unnecessary chances. By following proper lifting and reaching techniques and exercising properly, you'll help keep back problems behind you!

**When Lifting:**

Don't bend over an object you are lifting. Bend your knees, squatting in front of the object to reach it.

Lift the object slowly and carefully, using your leg and arm muscles to lift, not pulling with your back.

Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.

While lifting, keep the object as close to your body as possible.

Keep abdominal muscles tight while making the lift.

Use the same techniques when you put the object down.

If the object is too big or too heavy to lift using these techniques, use mechanical assistance or get someone else to help.

**Points to Take With You:**

-  Keep your back straight and vertical while lifting.
-  Don't twist as you lift.
-  Keep the load close to your body as you lift.
-  If a load is too heavy or cumbersome get someone to help you.

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