

Student Handout

Handling and Lifting

Improper handling and lifting of heavy or bulky objects are a major source of back injuries. These injuries can affect your quality of life for weeks, months, or even years, preventing you from working or doing many things you enjoy. Most lifting injuries are preventable.

Examples of risk factors

Risk factors are aspects of the job that put you at risk of injury. The risk of injury depends on how long and how many times you are exposed to a risk factor. The following tasks have the potential to put you at risk of injury:

- Lifting heavy equipment or boxes
- Carrying loads that are difficult to handle
- Pushing or pulling carts or other loads

Safety tips

Here are some things that employers and workers can do to reduce the risk of injury:

- Assess whether you'll need help from another person or a mechanical aid, such as a dolly, forklift, or hoist
- Get close to the object
- Bend at your hips and knees
- Get a good grip
- Lift smoothly and slowly, keeping the object close to your body
- Pivot with your feet instead of twisting your back
- Be sure you can see where you are going when carrying large items
- When storing items, organize storage areas by weight, with heavier, more frequently used items between knee and chest levels to minimize bending or reaching
- Whenever possible, work with arms at your sides and close to your body
- Use a stepladder rather than a chair or crate to reach elevated items

