

Basic Guidelines for Avoiding Injury when Lifting

The human body is extremely adaptable and is designed so that it can move in many different directions and positions. It is able to cope with heavy loads, repetitive stresses and sustained positions so long as the forces are distributed through the body evenly.

3 Ways Injuries Can Occur

1. Maintaining extreme postures for long periods of time
2. Putting large amounts of physical stress on our bodies while in an extreme posture
3. Doing repetitive movements in an extreme posture

Injuries can be prevented by sharing the physical stress throughout the body so that no one part is overstrained

By keeping the body in a 'neutral position', forces are evenly distributed throughout supporting structures and injuries are less likely to occur. This means the joints should be lined up in their mid positions, not bent one way or the other. This makes the body more efficient and reduces pain, fatigue and strain on nerves, ligaments, muscle and joints.

No matter what you are doing, the following three things will help prevent injury or prevent an existing injury from getting worse.

- Plan what you are about to do
- Change positions frequently
- Maintain the natural curve of your spine

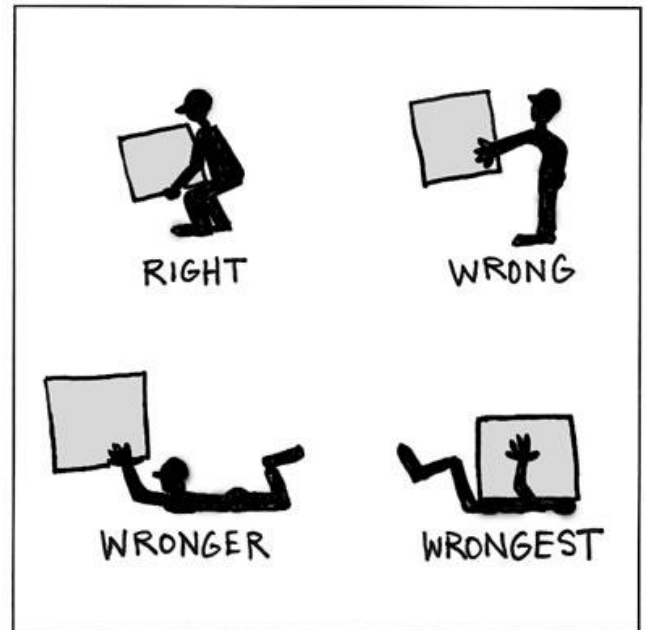


Lifting

It is rarely one heavy lift that injures your back. It is repetitive poor technique.

Before lifting:

- Plan and prepare the lift
- Remove any obstacles in the area
- Check the floor for any hazards and remove
- Position lifting aids correctly
- Distribute weight evenly
- Ensure the object is secure
- Plan your technique



Dos and Don'ts

- **Don't** lift loads that are too heavy. If necessary split the load or get help.
- **Do** get a secure grip. If possible, your whole hand should take the load, not just your fingers.
- **Do** keep feet spaced apart for balance.
- **Do** bend at your hips and knees and keep a small arch in your back as you lift.
- **Don't** lift and twist at the same time. If you have to turn while lifting, lift first then move step your feet around so you are not twisting your spine or knees.
- **Do** hold the object as close to your body as possible.
- **Do** use the big muscles in your thighs and buttocks to do the work when lifting, rather than your back.
- **Don't** overload yourself when carrying shopping bags or tools. Distribute the load evenly and make more than one trip if necessary.

