

# Safe Lifting & Stretching

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## THE PROBLEM

- Back injuries are the most common disabling workplace injury
- Back injuries are the second most common cause of lost work time, next to the common cold
- 80% of Americans will have a back injury needing medical attention in the course of their lifetime

## CAUSES OF BACK INJURIES

- Twisting at the waist while lifting
- Lifting or carrying objects with awkward or odd shapes
- Working in comfortable or awkward positions
- Reaching and lifting over your head, across a table, or out the back of a vehicle

## ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS THAT CAN LEAD TO BACK INJURIES

- Years of abuse
- Poor posture
- Unconditioned muscles
- Excess weight and potbellies
- Poor lifting techniques

## PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUES

- Stand close to the object and keep a wide stance. Keep feet turned out and heels down. Then squat by bending at the hips and knees. Ears, shoulders, and hips should form a nearly straight, vertical line
- Pull the load close to the body (this reduces pressure on the back) and grasp the object firmly. Tighten stomach muscles
- Maintain the natural curves of the spine and rise up from the squatting position using the legs to power the lift. Don't bend over at the neck, shoulders, or waist while lifting

## STRETCHING & CONDITIONING YOUR BACK

- Before you start your day, condition your back by conducting a few stretches:
- Roll your shoulders forward in small circles 10 times, and then backwards 10 times
- Stretch your neck and upper back by rolling your head slowly forward, bringing your chin toward your chest. Then turn your head slowly first to the left then to the right
- Conduct hamstring, quad, hip, and back extension stretches before you work to increase your range of motion and ready your muscles for lifting

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE – *True or False?*

1. When moving an object, it's safer if it stays on a level between your hip & shoulder height.
2. Frequent bending and lifting make you less likely to suffer a back injury.
3. You should use a stepstool to reach high objects rather than reach above your shoulders.
4. Don't twist your body- move your feet to change direction during a lift.