

Safe Lifting At Work and At Home

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

KEY POINTS:

- Keep your back straight when picking up, setting down or carrying objects.
- Don't bend from the waist.
- Plan out your route in advance.
- Ask for help if an object is too heavy to lift.

Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold. For more information, see our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets entitled Proper Lifting To Prevent Back Injuries, Proper body Movements to Avoid Injury, and Proper Lifting for Awkward Loads.

Avoiding back injuries

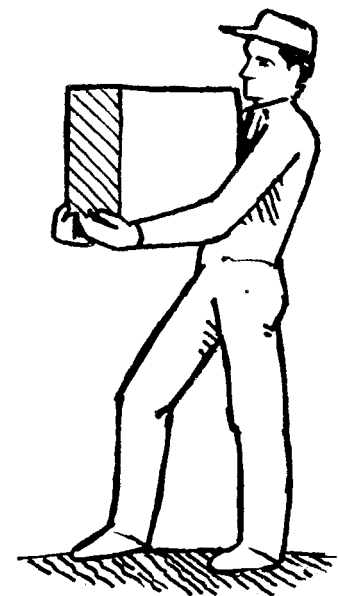
- Unless we have chronic back problems, most of us who are healthy don't think much about the importance of our backs.
- All it takes, though, is a torn ligament or serious strain or sprain and we know just how painful a back injury can be.
- Back injuries can result in lost work time, costly medical bills, and difficulty performing day-to-day tasks both at work and at home.
- One good way to avoid a back injury is to practice correct lifting procedures.
- This is important whether you are lifting large pots, boxes, tools, lumber, or other items at work, or whether you are lifting a laundry tub filled with wet clothes, heavy grocery bags, or a child at home.
- Sometimes even twisting to reach into the back seat of your vehicle can result in back problems.
- Remember that serious back injuries can last a lifetime.

Common reasons for back injuries

- Did you know that each pound of weight you lift puts close to 7½ pounds of pressure on your lower back?
- That's an important fact to remember so you aren't tempted to lift something by yourself that requires extra help.
- Here are some other common reasons back injuries occur:
 - person is overtired, ill, or in too much of a hurry
 - person is overweight or otherwise in poor physical shape
 - objects are lifted higher than chest high
 - person twists body when lifting or carrying objects
 - back isn't kept straight when lifting
 - person bends at the waist to pick up or set down an object
- Remember to always ask for help if an object is bulky or too heavy to handle on your own.



Don't bend your back when setting down objects.



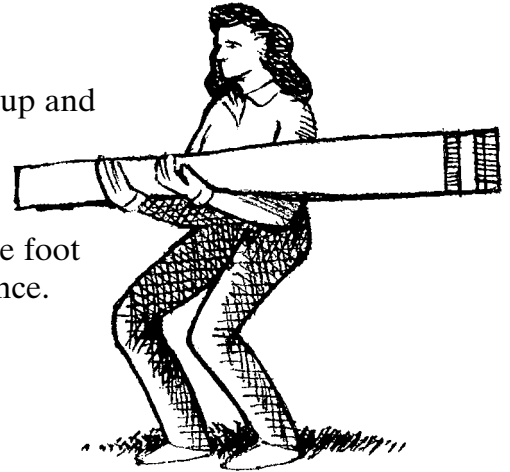
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See our [full line of safety supplies](#), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

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Important safe lifting tips

1. Bend your knees - **do not** bend from the waist – when picking up and setting down objects.
2. Keep your back as straight as possible at all times.
3. Get a firm footing before picking up a heavy object. Be sure your [shoes](#) have good traction. Then part your feet and put one foot slightly in front of the other. This will help give you good balance.
4. Keep the object you are carrying close to your body. Don't let objects bounce around.
5. Don't twist your body when carrying a heavy object.
6. Don't lift objects higher than chest high.
7. If an object is out of reach, change your position or location. Or, pull the object toward you if you can easily do so.



Be sure you have firm footing before lifting a heavy object.

More safety tips

- Plan ahead. Make sure your path is clear, you have a clear line of vision, and you'll have a clear place to set the object down.
- Check for wet spots or an otherwise slippery floor or ground, and anything else that could cause you to slip and fall.
- Use sturdy [ladders](#) or other [safe platforms](#).
- If you use a [back brace](#), be sure to check recommended procedures.
- Don't push or pull too heavy of a load.
- Make sure you have a good grip on the object you are lifting. [Grip gloves](#) are often very helpful.
- Choose lightweight tools that will still do the job, such as lightweight [rakes](#) and [shovels](#) at home. These are less likely to cause strain on your back.
- Avoid prolonged heavy lifting. Take scheduled breaks to give your back a chance to rest.
- Don't be in a hurry or become distracted when you are lifting.
- Use both hands when carrying a heavy object.
- Check your company's safety rules for weight restrictions.



Always get a good grip on the object you are lifting.

Are there any questions?

*Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the **Carbon Monoxide Do's and Don'ts**.*

SAFE LIFTING DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- Regularly exercise and stay in good physical shape.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- See your supervisor or ask a co-worker for help if you think an object is too heavy to lift on your own.

DON'T:

- Lift heavy objects if you are overtired, ill, or in a big hurry.
- Overreach, or lift objects higher than chest high.
- Forget to practice safe lifting techniques at home.

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