

WATCH YOUR BACK!

FOLLOWING THESE TIPS CAN HELP PREVENT BACK INJURIES!



Back injuries are some of the most common and costly injuries in the workplace. These include injuries to the spinal column, and strains or sprains to back muscles, tendons and ligaments.

Back injuries aren't usually caused by picking up very heavy items. More often, damage happens when you use the wrong technique in lifting common, smaller items like boxes of printer paper. Around the motor pool, that might include stacks of old paper TMs!

To ward off a bum back, make sure to learn and use safe lifting techniques.

Here are some general tips for preventing workplace injuries:

- Do warm-ups before any physical exertion.

- Avoid excessive bending, reaching or twisting motions.



- Stand straight but not rigid; this maintains the natural curves in your back. Keep knees flexed.
- When sitting, choose a comfortable, relaxed position, keeping your back straight. Don't slouch.

- When lying down, help your back curve naturally. Use a low pillow under your head and neck. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.

- Stay physically fit.



Exercise makes your back and abdomen muscles stronger, reducing the chance of injury.

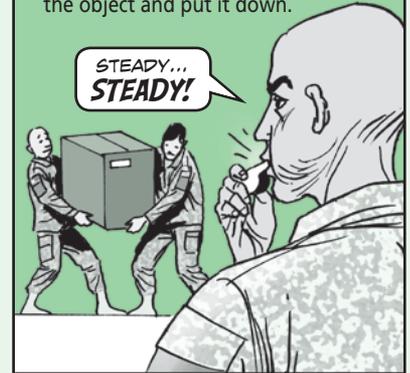
Here are some lifting tips:

- Check the weight of the item you want to lift to see if you need help. One way to test is by grasping the object firmly by an outside corner and tipping it toward you. You may be able to tell if it is too heavy for one person. If in doubt, ask for help.



- Bend your knees when lifting items instead of stooping over. Keep your back straight and vertical to the ground. Keeping your head up and stomach muscles tight also helps with proper posture.
- Never twist your body when carrying a load. If you must turn, move your feet, rather than your body.

- When using a team lift, appoint one person as the leader who tells everyone else when to pick up the object and put it down.



- Plan your route ahead. Be sure there is a clear path where you need to carry an item. Have a place to put the item down once you get there.



- Carry items close to your body. Lifting or carrying things at arm's length puts more strain on your back.
- When setting down a load, make sure not to put strain on your back by bending over. Squat down instead.
- If possible, use equipment for lifting and carrying heavy items. Materials handling equipment like handcarts and stock pickers move items faster without risking your back.

Prevention is always better than trying to patch up injuries later. Try to reduce the need for manual lifting around your work area. If you have ideas for safer or easier materials handling, tell your supervisor.

For safety-related tools and programs you can put into practice today, visit the US Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center website at: <https://safety.army.mil>