

AVOID LIFTING INJURIES

BEFORE THE LIFT

- Stretch and warm up before lifting. Limber muscles are less likely to pull or tear.
- Size up the load before lifting. Test the weight by moving a corner of the object and decide whether you can handle it alone or if you need help.
- If possible, divide a heavy load into several smaller ones.
- Make sure you have enough room to lift safely. Clear a space around the object before lifting it.
- Inspect your intended path of travel for obstacles or other possible hazards. Make sure you have a clear path to carry the load, can see where you are going and have a clear area to set it down.
- If possible, avoid walking on slippery, uneven surfaces while carrying any load.
- Don't rely on a lifting belt to protect your back. When used improperly, they can actually damage your back.
- Position yourself so that you do not have to stretch to lift the load.
- If a package is above your shoulders, tilt the package in a way to minimize lifting above your head. This allows you to use the fulcrum point of the shelf the box is on and bring it closer to your power zone prior to having to bear the entire weight.
- Do not reach with your arms outstretched to carry any measurable weight. This decreases the optimal carrying weight and increases the risk of injury to the shoulders and back.
- If needed, place the package down on floor in order to reposition your grip and properly lift it with bent knees to relieve stress from the back.
- Avoid loading heavier packages on higher shelves.

DURING THE LIFT

- Stand with your feet close to the object and center yourself over the load.
- Get a firm footing. Place your feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly forward of the other.
- Bend at your knees, not your waist, to get your legs ready to support the load. This is the single most important part of lifting.
- Grip the object firmly with the palms of your hands around the corners of the object.
- Let your leg muscles do the work. They are stronger than any other muscle in your body.
- Straighten your legs to lift straight up in a slow, smooth motion.
- Keep the load close to your body. For greater strength and stability, lift and carry the object near your waist.
- Move your feet when you change directions. Turning with your upper body while carrying your load causes strains.
- Do not arch your back. This makes the nerve roots open to pinching and causes strains in weaker muscles.
- Bend your knees again as you lower the load.
- Pace yourself. Take small breaks between lifts if you are lifting a number of items.

HEAVIER LOADS

You should also know your limits. Some loads are too heavy to be lifted by one person so you should ask for help or use mechanical lifting or carrying equipment, such as a dolly or forklift, when needed.