

# Lifting Safety

According to the National Safety Council, back injuries are one of the most common types of occupational injuries. To reduce or eliminate back injuries, it is critical to plan ahead when moving heavy equipment and to use proper lifting techniques.

## How to Prepare for a Lift

- Warm up or stretch before attempting to lift a heavy object.
- Wear gloves if you need to grip the object firmly. Gloves may also prevent scrapes and cuts.
- Wear the appropriate shoes for the task being performed.

## What to do Before Lifting

- Assess the load before you lift.
  - If the load is heavy, get a mechanical aid (i.e. dolly/push cart) or help from a coworker.
  - If the weight of the object is unknown, test its weight to see if it can be safely lifted.
  - If possible, divide large loads into smaller ones.
  - Examine the surface for any rough edges or irregularities that could interfere with your grip.
- Make sure that you have a safe path to carry the load.
  - To avoid accidents, keep the aisles clear.
  - Wet or slick surfaces must be cleaned before use.
  - Make sure you have a clear place to set the object down.

## How to Lift Safely

- Keep your feet apart.
- Maintain a firm grip on the load while keeping your elbows slightly bent and tucked in.
- Maintain as much proximity to the object as possible.
- Place your feet near the object and center yourself over it.
- During the lift, keep your back straight and your core tight (see the picture to the right).
- Lift with your legs and keep your gaze straight ahead before and during your lift.
- Do not twist or bend at the waist. If you need to turn, use your feet instead of your body.
- Apply the same principles to set the load down properly.



## References

- OSHA: [Technical Manual- Section VII: Chapter 1- Back Disorders and Injuries](#)
- OSHA Safety and Health Topics: [Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace](#)
- West Virginia University EHS: [Lifting and Material Handling Guidelines](#)