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SAFE LIFTING

Here are some suggestions on how to lift things without injuring yourself – a short training course that can save you long-lasting pain.

1. **Lift Comfortably** – Lift in the way that produces the least strain. Usually, this means keeping the back upright and bending the knees so the lift is done with the legs. But some people do not have enough strength in their legs to lift comfortably this way, since it requires lifting the whole weight of the upper body, as well as the object, and may require a greater expenditure of energy. Use your judgment in determining what feels least strenuous for you. If the load can be divided to make it lighter, consider that option.

2. **Avoid Unnecessary Bending** – Bending forward exerts pressure on your spine. Whenever possible, objects should be placed on raised platforms, tables, or shelves for future handling, and not on floors. This eliminates the need to get low to grasp the object. And if you must get down low to grasp the object, try to do it by squatting down and getting close to the object, rather than bending over and reaching out.

3. **Avoid Twisting** – Turn your feet, not your hips or shoulders. Leave enough room to shift your feet so you will not have to twist. The twisting movement is frequently associated with lower back injuries. The lift should be made in the direction of the eventual movement. Since this is not always possible, you should have room available to shift your feet so that your upper body does not need to be twisted. A simple way to reduce the amount of twisting needed is to turn your forward foot out slightly, pointing it in the direction of the planned move.

4. **Keep Your Feet Apart** – For a heavier object, one foot should be along the side of the object, and one should be slightly behind. This position increases your stability and improves your balance, can reduce stress on your trunk and arms, and puts your feet and legs in the proper position to provide thrust for the lift.

5. **Avoid Reaching Out** – Handle heavy objects close to your body. Avoid long reaches to pick up objects, because the distance between your body and the object to be lifted can stress your back. The farther your hand is from your



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body, the greater the risk of an injury. Keep the load close to your body, and your arms and elbows close to your sides.

6. Use Your Whole Hand - Grasp the object with your entire hand, and not just your fingers and thumb. Your grip is strongest when your grasp comes close to making a fist. This stronger grip will relieve stress on the rest of your arm, and reduce the chances of letting the load slip or losing balance.

7. Avoid Excessive Loads – By excessive, we mean not only too heavy, but also too large or awkward to be grasped securely or to permit you to see. If the load is too heavy, too bulky or too awkward, get help. Use a mechanical device if one is available. You should lift only what you can handle without straining. Check the load by making a slight effort to move it a little before you try to lift it. Get help to handle loads that are too heavy for one person.

8. Lift Gradually – Lift slowly and smoothly – no sudden movements.

9. Plan Your Route – Do you have a clear path? Where will you place the load when you get there?

10. Keep in Good Physical Shape– Get proper exercise and maintain a good diet. Low back disabilities are related often to weak abdominal muscles. The ‘abs’ support the lower back. When they are weak, the lower back misses their support.