

# BACK OFF: BACK INJURIES AND SAFE LIFTING

Did you know back injuries in the workplace are the leading injury requiring days away from work each year? Injuries involving the back can be easily prevented. Poor lifting techniques and overexertion can lead to sprains, strains or tears causing pain and discomfort. More severe injuries can cause disc displacement, which may lead to chronic or severe back pain.

## KNOW THE CAUSE

Knowledge is power. Knowing what causes back injuries is important for prevention. Here are a few ways you can avoid a back injury:



- Keep yourself moving – sitting or standing too long in one position can be very hard on your lower back
- Ask for help – if there is a large or heavy object that needs to be moved, ask for help; awkward positions also may lead to injury
- Rest when needed – lifting for a long time increases your risk for injury

## SAFE LIFTING

Safe lifting is a primary way to minimize risk of a back injury. The following steps outline the basic process of safe lifting.

1. Plan ahead: Map your route in advance and pay attention to your environment
2. Keep the object close to the body when lifting: Aligning the body with the object will help maintain stability
3. Create a solid base: Make sure feet are spread shoulder-width apart to maintain a stable base that does not obstruct movement
4. Move the body to the object: Be sure you have a secure grip on the object before lifting, with knees bent and back straight
5. Let your legs do the lifting: This is one of the most important aspects of proper lifting technique; let your legs do the work as the object is moved in order to minimize strain on your back
6. Don't over exert! If the object is too heavy to handle comfortably, ask for help

## USE LIFTING AIDS AND SUPPORTS

Lifting aids such as dollies, wheeled carts and adjustable work tables are great alternatives to help you move and handle objects safely. Aids can minimize unnecessary bending and twisting that increase the risk of injury.