

BACK SAFETY

Fact Sheet

What's the best way to pick up an object?

- Use slow and smooth movements. Hurried, jerky movements can strain the muscles in your back.
- Keep your body facing the object while you lift it. Twisting while lifting can hurt your back.
- Keep the load close to your body. Having to reach out to lift and carry an object may hurt your back.
- "Lifting with your legs" should be done only when you can straddle the load. To lift with your legs, bend your knees, not your back, to pick up the load. Keep your back straight.
- Try to carry the load in the space between your shoulder and your waist. This puts less strain on your back muscles.

How can I avoid back injuries?

- Warm up. Stretch your legs and your back before lifting anything.
- Pace yourself. Take many small breaks between lifts if you are lifting a number of things.
- Don't overdo it--don't try to lift something too heavy for you. If you have to strain to carry the load, it's too heavy.
- Make sure you have enough room to lift safely. Clear a space around the object before lifting it.
- Look around before you lift, and look around as you carry. Make sure you can see where you are walking. Know where you are going to put down the load.
- Avoid walking on slippery, uneven surfaces while carrying something.
- Don't rely on a back belt to protect you. It hasn't been proven that back belts can protect you from back injury.
- Get help before you try to lift a heavy load. Use a dolly or a forklift if you can.