

BACK PAIN

MANUAL WORK AND LOW BACK PAIN

Introduction

Work or activities that involve lifting or loading heavy objects, particularly over a long period of time, can result in back pain. Another important cause of back pain is repetitive strain (repeating the same manual activity over and over again).

Think ahead when lifting ^{1,2}

- Do I need assistance lifting? Is this a job for more than one person?
- Are there any objects in my way?
- Do I know exactly where I am taking this object and how long it will take?
- Is there anywhere I can stop, rest and change my grip?
- Do I need any special equipment or support, such as a back brace?
- Do I know the proper technique for handling this object?

The safe way to lift ^{1,2}

- Place your feet about shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly forward to maintain balance.
- Keep the object you are lifting as close to your waist as possible, with the heaviest part closest to you.
- Bend your knees —not your low back— to pick up and set down the object.
- Use your leg muscles to lift the load in one fluid movement, straightening your knees steadily while holding the load close to your body.

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- Avoid turning or twisting, especially when your back is bent. If you have to turn, use your feet. Try to keep your shoulders in line with your hips.
- Once your grip is safe and secure, keep your head up as you carry the object to its destination. Look ahead, not down.

Important!

When unsure about a certain lifting or manual activity, always ask a work supervisor or doctor for safe guidelines.

Breaks and rest periods^{1,2}

Proper rest periods are essential for individuals performing manual tasks such as lifting or loading.



People doing repetitive physical tasks also need to take plenty of breaks to avoid strain or injury. If possible, switch arms or hands frequently, alternate different types of task or change the direction of movement. Changing positions while sitting or standing can also help.

Questions about your diagnosis?

Unsure which treatment is right for you?

Did you know you have access to a free, independent and confidential decision support service?

Discuss your concerns and have your case reviewed by a specialist in your condition.

The decision is yours. And we're with you all the way.



1. Manual handling at work. A brief guide. Health and Safety Executive website. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf> Published November 2012. Accessed May 15, 2017.

2. Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace. World Health Organization website. http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/en/oe-hmsd3.pdf Published 2003. Accessed May 15, 2017