

The Mechanics of Lifting

Everyday we use our backs for lifting and rarely think about possible injury. It's not until we've hurt ourselves that we become acutely aware of the importance of proper lifting mechanics and body posture. Understanding and using proper lifting mechanics can aid you in maintaining a healthy back for many years to come.

Understanding Your Back

Your back is an amazing part of your body that allows you to bend, twist and turn in any number of ways to perform many daily tasks. There are four parts of your back that aid in performing these tasks: spinal column, intervertebral discs, spinal cord, and the muscles of the back and abdomen.

Your spine is comprised of 24 bones called vertebrae separated by discs of gel-like material structured in an "S" shape. It is this "S" curve that helps maintain your balance, distribute your weight evenly, and absorb shock. Improper lifting techniques, poor posture, weak muscles, and stress can cause severe and painful injuries to the back. One way we can help to avoid these problems is through proper body mechanics.

Using proper lifting mechanics can help you maintain a healthy back for many years to come!



Proper Body Mechanics

- Evaluate your lift. Can you lift it comfortably? Is it too heavy, bulky, or awkward to lift alone? Is there a mechanical device such as a handcart or dolly that can help?
- Plan your path. Check to make sure your path is clear with no obstructions and that you have a safe place to set your load.
- Prepare for your lift using a straight and upright back, tightening your stomach muscles, and tucking your chin into your chest.
- Make sure your footing is firm and that your feet are shoulder-width apart for balance. One foot should be close to the load, the other slightly behind you.
- Lower yourself into a squatting position with your back upright – do not bend at the waist.
- Use your whole hand, not just your fingers, to grip the object firmly.
- Keep the object close to you, and with a straight back, start your lift.
- Allow the stronger muscles in your thighs do the lifting.
- As you straighten your legs, look up, move slowly, and exhale during the lift.
- Never twist at the waist or knees; instead, pivot on the balls of your feet.

Following these simple rules for lifting safely and using proper body mechanics can help to maintain a healthy back and avoid serious and painful injuries.



SafetyConnection: The Mechanics Lifting

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