

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE

SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES

LIFTING WITHOUT BACK PAIN

Helping passengers with bundles of gifts or bags from their holidays can result in serious back injuries if you don't lift correctly.

Today, 50% of all lost time injuries are sprains and strains mainly to the back and neck. Over half of those who have time off work with back pain suffer another attack



within a year. Two thirds of back injuries are attributed to poor manual handling skills.

Most of these injuries, however, could have been prevented the proper use of injury prevention techniques such as the daily use of spinal motion stretches and exercises coupled with correct posture and general work techniques.

SPINAL MOTION STRETCHES AND EXERCISES

1. Flexion Stretch—Chin to Chest

While standing or sitting, gently bend the head forward while bringing the chin toward the chest until a stretch is felt in the back of neck.

2. Lateral Flexion—Ear to Shoulder

This exercise stretches the neck area below the ears as well as the top of the shoulder. To begin, gently bend the neck to one side as if to touch the ear to the shoulder until a stretch is felt in the side of the neck. Switch to stretch the other side.

CORRECT POSTURE

Drivers with stiff backs are more at risk of injury than those who flex their muscles and have good posture.

Any posture, no matter how perfect, can lead to discomfort if held for too long – so have a variety of positions available and take regular breaks to stretch out your back. Experts recommend taking a break of at least 15 minutes every two hours. Two hours needs to be the maximum period of time without a break from driving, but take more breaks if necessary and don't forget to get out of your cab for a proper break each time.

When you first get in the car, you should adjust the steering wheel, chair height, back rest and other moveable parts of the seat so that you are sitting more comfortable. You

should also make sure you have adequate vision out the front window and in the rear vision windows, then you won't need to stretch awkwardly in order to see. The same applies for the equipment, make sure you can easily reach across to the technology as you require it.

If you experience any discomfort whilst driving or after lifting a heavy load, listen to your body. Inform the appropriate person and see a doctor as soon as possible.



TIPS FOR SAFE LIFTING

Plan before you lift. Remove anything that is in the way. Pushing is easier than pulling. Pulling is easier than carrying. Lowering loads causes less strain than lifting.

Get help for heavy or bulky loads. Use equipment like a cart to help when possible.

Warm up your muscles with gentle stretches before you lift. This is very important if you have been sitting for more than 15 minutes in the cab before lifting.

Test the weight of the load first. Be sure that you can handle it safely. A big load of the same weight will put more strain on your body than a small load. Break your load into smaller or lighter loads.

Face the way you need to move. Avoid twisting or side bending. Turn your entire body. Place your feet wide apart to keep your balance.

Hold the load close to your body. Grip the load using your whole hand not just the fingers. Using your whole hand will give you the greatest grip area and strength. Balance your load evenly between both arms.

Lift with as straight a back as is comfortable. Tighten your abdominal (stomach) muscles. Bend your legs so they do the lifting.

Keep the load between shoulder and knee height. Avoid reaching.

Change your position and stretch to relax and rest your tired muscles. You need time to recover your strength between lifts to be able to work safely. Repeated and long lifts are the most tiring. Switch between heavy loads and lighter ones.

Plan where to set the load down. Place loads on raised platform. Leave enough room for your hands to grip the load. Avoid placing loads directly on the floor.

Rest more often when it is hot and humid and stay hydrated.

Take more time to warm up your muscles when it is cold.

