

# 5

## minute safety talk



## Lifting and Back Safety

Back injuries are among the most common type of occupational injuries. A few precautions and proper lifting techniques can prevent overexertion while lifting. Pain is not a warning. When you feel back pain, the damage is most likely done. Once a back injury occurs, you are three to five times more likely to experience subsequent injuries. It's important to know how to protect your back when lifting.

You can protect yourself by following these tips from the National Safety Council.

- Start each day with slow stretches to warm up your muscles prior to lifting.
- Know the proper ways to use your equipment.
- Wear gloves and appropriate footwear to protect your hands and feet while lifting.
- Gauge the size of the load by tipping it on its side to see if you can carry it comfortably.
- Ask for help when the load is too much for one person.
- Make sure your footing is solid, bend your knees, lift with your legs, and keep your back straight.
- Center your body over your feet and get a good grip on the object. Don't pull the object to you.
- Hold the object close to your body.
- Pull your stomach in firmly to use your core strength.
- Lift with your legs – not your back. If you need to turn, move your feet. Never twist your back.
- Keep your movements simple to avoid a sudden pull or push in a direction other than the one you anticipated.
- Keep the load properly balanced.
- Reduce muscle fatigue. Change positions often so you are not always using the same muscles.

### The Importance of Exercise

Exercising significantly contributes to injury prevention. Abdominal muscle strength has the greatest impact on spinal stability. Sit ups and crunches are the best way to work abdominal muscles. In addition to exercising your core muscle

group, it's important to improve and maintain your flexibility. Tight muscles, especially tight hamstrings and hip flexors, increase tension on the lower back. There are stretches that can help loosen these muscles.

**Hamstring Stretch** – Stand with one leg in front of the other – just far enough apart to cause tension. Put your weight over your front thigh and knee until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg. Hold steady and then switch legs.

**Hip Flexors Stretch** – Find a dry place to sit down. Bend your knees at a 90-degree angle and place the soles of your feet against each other. Then, grab the tops of your feet with your hands and rest your elbows on the insides of your knees. Push your elbows down slowly trying not to bounce your knees up and down. Stop pushing when the tension in your thighs becomes uncomfortable.

Assist your victim in a way that is safe for both you and the individual. That means working within your capabilities. Thinking of your safety first will help you provide the best care to those you are rescuing. Work as a team and use proper safety tools. Before rushing onto a scene, ask yourself "What is the best and safest way for me to provide assistance?" Remember, when lifting, be mindful of your body placement in relation to the load.

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