

When workers lift and carry materials often throughout the workday, or do so for long periods of time, a constant stress on the back and shoulders develops that can lead to serious muscle or joint injuries.

Lifting and carrying loads heavier than 50 pounds as well as using an improper lifting technique greatly increase the risk of injury. NIOSH recommends that one person lift no more than 51 lbs. when the lifting can be done safely:

- When you pick up or set down a load, don't reach more than 10 inches away from your body.
- Don't twist your body. Do not jerk or snatch the load as you lift.
- Lift with your legs, not your back. Keep your back as straight as possible.
- Lift the load using a solid two-handed grip.

When lifting materials at work you can't always follow these best practices. In that case, the 51 lb. weight limit should be lowered for the safety of the worker.

1. When you are ready to perform the lift, get as close as possible and position yourself so your feet are near the base of the item and center yourself in front of the load. Your feet should be spread shoulder width apart.
 2. Bend at your knees and squat down, keeping your back as straight as possible. Get a good grip. Do not lift or carry items using only 1-2 fingers, use your whole hand to hold.
 3. Grasp the load firmly with both arms and slowly stand up by straightening your legs, pushing with your leg muscles, while maintaining a straight posture with your back. Keep your elbows close to your sides and keep the load close to your body.
- If you must turn while holding or carrying, turn your feet so your whole body turns. Do not turn at the waist and keep your shoulders in line with your hips.
 - If you must set the item down below waist level, then follow the same procedures in reverse order. Bend at the knees, not at the hips.
 - If you are lifting with a partner, the same safe lifting techniques apply, with one person on either side of the heavy load. Communicate clearly so you both lift and set down at the same time.



Apply these safety tips when the job requires manual lifting:

- Have materials delivered close to where they will be used.
- When lifting one load that is heavier than 50 pounds, use at least two people for the lift.
- Do not ask a co-worker to add more items on top of something else you have already lifted.
- Use a hand truck, pallet jack, or forklift to lift and transport heavier items.
- Do not lift and carry more than you can safely handle. Divide the load to make it lighter or ask for help to lift the load. If items are packed into heavy boxes or containers, consider repacking them so they weigh less.
- To lift materials that have a smooth, flat surface, consider using a suction device that provides a temporary handle that makes lifting easier.
- Avoid lifting heavy items over your head to attempt to place them on a rack. Instead place these heavier items on a lower shelf to make it easier for future retrieval.
- If you feel fatigued, set the load down and rest.



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