

Safety Matters

SilverStone Group: Your workplace safety partner

Avoid Injury – Practice Safe Lifting

Lifting—whether it involves patients or heavy medical equipment—is a common activity and it is often forgotten that there are proper techniques that need to be followed to avoid injury. In fact, lower back injuries are the most common work-related injury cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Safe Lifting Basics

Safe lifting plays an important role in keeping your back healthy and you safe. There are safe lifting techniques that take strain off the lower back area:

- If a patient is too heavy to lift by yourself, ask for help.
- Use a lift to help assist with heavier patients.
- Clear away any potential obstacles before transporting the patient or equipment.
- While carrying anything, your grip should be firm. Carrying objects will change your balance. To keep this to a minimum, hold the load close to your body and to your normal center of gravity, between the legs and shoulders.
- Use good foot positioning. Your feet should be shoulder width apart, with one foot beside and the other foot behind the object that you are going to lift. This allows you to use the full power of your leg muscles. Leg muscles are stronger and more powerful than back muscles, so let your legs do the work.
- Bend your knees. Bending over at the waist to reach for the object or person you want to lift puts strain on your back, shoulder and neck muscles.

- Keep your arms and elbows as close to your body as you can while lifting. If you have to stretch your arms out completely away from your body, ask for assistance with the lift.
- Use your feet to change direction. Don't twist your body. Twisting adds to the stress of the lift and affects your balance.
- To lower the object or patient, bend your knees as you did to pick it up. Make sure your hands and feet are clear when lowering the object or patient.

Safe lifting of heavy objects or patients requires training and practice. And when equipment is available, it should be used to lift and carry heavy objects.

Team Lifting

When another person is helping you lift, teamwork is very important. If you're going to be carrying the object or patient to another location, both of you should coordinate this prior to lifting. Check the route and clearance. One worker needs to be in a position to observe and direct the other. Lifting and lowering should be done in unison. Don't let the load drop suddenly without warning your partner.

Your Safety is Important

Proper lifting methods protect against injury and makes continued work much easier. It is important to think about what you are going to do before lifting an object – over time, these safe lifting techniques will become habit. Contact your supervisor if you have any questions or concerns regarding safe lifting techniques.

Safe lifting of heavy objects requires training and practice, but helps keep you and your back healthy and safe.

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