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Factsheet

My Healthy WorkSpace – Lifting and Bending Well

If you need to lift and bend to perform your work, you should do it safely.

A wide range of professions and occupations require workers to lift and bend at regular intervals during their workday. Moving or lifting objects that are large, heavy, bulky, awkward or difficult to handle can put employees at risk of work-related musculoskeletal disorders. These disorders can occur suddenly or develop over time and include sprains, strains, fractures and soft-tissue injuries to the back, hips or shoulders.

What professions and occupations require regular lifting and bending?

Many professions and occupations require regular lifting while others require frequent standing in a stooped position, including those who work in healthcare, aged care, childcare, disability services, manufacturing and trades and first responders.

What impact could lifting and bending have on the health of workers?

If you use incorrect lifting and bending techniques, you may cause damage to your back including to the bones, joints, connective tissue, and muscles or nerves. Work requiring awkward postures such as twisting or reaching above shoulder height or below knee height can also increase risks of injury.

Injuries can affect any part of the back, but most injuries happen in the lower back. Common injuries include sprains and strains, herniated disks or fractured vertebrae that vary in seriousness which, if not diagnosed and treated early, can progress to a chronic condition that can impact daily life.

People aged 30 and over are at greater risk of injury caused by lifting and bending.

How can employers help minimise workspace injuries from lifting and bending?

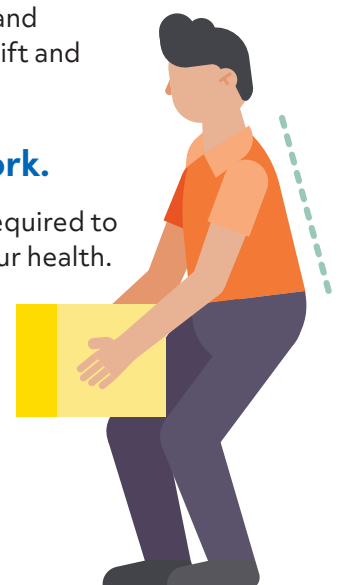
In Australia, employers have a responsibility to keep workers safe from the risks of lifting and bending. To help prevent health risks, employers should provide equipment designed to lift and move heavy objects. Employers should also encourage regular movement breaks.

How to maintain a healthy spine when bending and lifting at work.

With prevention the best protection against all workspace injuries, for workers who are required to regularly lift and bend, follow some simple steps to help minimise the impact on spinal your health.

Assess and plan the activity

- Plan the lift and have a clear understanding of where you are moving the object to.
- Remove obstacles from the pathway.
- Warm up or stretch before lifting heavy weights.
- Assess the object's weight. If the object is too heavy or bulky, ask a co-worker for help.
- Where possible, use equipment to move heavy objects.
- If possible, disassemble larger objects into smaller, more manageable parts.



Use correct stance and movement when lifting

- Always keep your back straight.
- Always stand as close as possible and face the object you are lifting.
- Spread your feet apart to give your body a wide base of support.
- Bend at your knees – do NOT bend or arch your back.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as you lift the object up or lower it down.
- Hold the object as close to your body as possible.
- Ensure you have a firm grip on the object before you lift.
- Always keep your eyes and feet pointing in the same direction when moving the object.
- Slowly lift, using your muscles in your hips and knees.
- As you stand up with the object, DO NOT bend forward.
- Lift smoothly without jerking.
- Do not twist your back or side bend while you bend to reach, lift or carry the object.
- Squat as you set the object down, using the muscles in your knees and hips.

Do not perform a lift if you are not confident that you can handle the load safely!

How to minimise injuries caused by lifting and bending.

- Plan tasks ahead of time to limit lifting and moving.
- Use equipment such as trolleys to assist with moving objects.
- Take breaks to interrupt repetitive lifting alternating between tasks and stretch regularly.
- If required to stoop often, interrupt the stopped position at regular intervals - Stand upright and bend backwards five or six times or go for a quick walk around the room/site.
- To reach loads above your shoulders, use an appropriate stool or ladder.
- Slide objects instead of lifting and carrying them.
- Push objects instead of pulling them.
- Design your workspace to avoid excessive bending, twisting, and stretching.

How can consulting an ACA chiropractor help?

Intervention is the best protection against all workspace injuries. To help prevent injuries caused by lifting and bending, consult an ACA chiropractor who can assess your overall spinal health and provide advice on postural correctness, stretches and exercises to improve flexibility, mobility and overall spinal health. And if you have experienced a workspace injury or pain in the lower or mid back, neck or shoulders, consult a chiro for low-risk, drug-free, personalised chiropractic care and help improve your spinal health and overall wellbeing.

Spinal Health Month is the Australian Chiropractors Association's flagship campaign aimed at educating Australians about the importance of maintaining positive spinal health. Look for the ACA Member logo at your local chiropractor or to locate an ACA chiropractor near you, visit

consultchiro.org.au

For a full list of references, visit chiro.org.au/references