Safe Lifting/Back Safety Training

Environmental Health and Safety
Why Back Safety is Important

- Back injuries are considered by OSHA the nation’s #1 workplace safety problem
- Back injuries are often:
  - Very painful
  - A long term or lifetime disability
  - Expensive to diagnose and treat
Get to Know Your Back

- Your back is composed of vertebrae, discs, nerves, and muscles
- The spine’s basic functions include
  - Providing support
  - Protecting the spinal cord
  - Providing flexibility to allow bending and rotating
Get to Know Your Back

- Your spinal cord is the main information highway for your entire body.
- Because your spine is a delicate structure, you will experience pain whenever you strain, sprain, or in some way injure your back.
Causes of Back Pain

- Poor Posture
- Poor Physical Condition - out of shape
- Tension and Stress
- Aging and Disease
- Impact Trauma
- Repetitive Trauma
- Incorrect Lifting
Lifting Safely

- Assess the situation- Before lifting and carrying a heavy object, take a few moments to assess the situation.
  - How far will you have to carry the load?
  - Is the way clear of clutter, cords, slippery areas, overhangs, stairs, curbs, or uneven surfaces?
  - Will there be doors that are closed? Ask someone to hold a door open or place a wedge under the door to hold it open.
  - Once you get the load up, will you be able to see over the load, or will the load block your view?
  - Can the load be disassembled, carried in pieces, then reassembled?
Before You Lift

- Size up the load - test the weight by lifting a corner of the object. If it is too heavy or an odd shape - STOP!!!

  - Ask for help
  - Use a mechanical lift device
  - Consider using gloves that will improve your grip and protect your hands.
  - Never lift anything unless you are sure you can do so safely.
Lifting the Load

- The KEY to lifting safely is keeping your back straight or slightly arched. NEVER USE YOUR BACK TO LIFT!
Lifting the Load

- Start the lift by putting your feet close to the object. Get a firm footing.
- Center your body over your feet.
- Squat down like a professional weightlifter, bending your knees. Keep your back straight or slightly arched. You want your legs to do the lifting, not your back.
- Grasp the load securely with your hands, and pull the load close to you.
- Smoothly lift straight up. NEVER TWIST YOUR BODY WHILE LIFTING, KEEPING YOUR HEAD UP, AS IF LOOKING STRAIGHT AHEAD, NOT DOWN.
Carrying the Load

- As you carry the load
  - Keep your back straight or slightly arched.
  - Walk slowly and surely.
  - Use your feet to change directions. Never twist your back.
  - Avoid leaning over.
  - Avoid lifting a load over your head.
  - If you become tired, set the load down, and rest for a few moments.
Setting the Load Down

- Opposite of lifting the load
  - Position yourself where you want to set the load.
  - Squat down. Let your legs do the work, not your back.
  - **REMEMBER NOT TO TWIST YOUR BODY WHILE SETTING DOWN A LOAD, AND KEEP YOUR HEAD UP.**
  - Once the load is where you want it, release your grip. Never release your grip on a load until it is secure. You don't want to drop a load on your foot. Or, if someone is helping you, dropping a load unexpectedly can injure the other person.
Alternatives to Lifting

- Handtrucks and Pushcarts
  
  - Remember, it is easier to push than pull
  
  - Stay close to the load, try not to lean over, and keep your back straight or slightly arched.
  
  - Use both hands to control the handtruck or pushcart.
  
  - Use tie-down straps, if necessary, to secure the load.
  
  - Avoid stairs and inclines. If you must take a load to another floor, use a freight elevator.
  
  - Never "horse around" with handtrucks and pushcarts
Alternatives to Lifting

- **Forktrucks**
  - If an object is too heavy to lift or carry with a handtruck or load onto a pushcart, use a forklift.
  - **WARNING:** Never attempt to operate a forklift or other piece of lifting equipment unless you have been trained and authorized to do so.
Maintaining a Healthy Back

- **Posture**
  - **Standing** - don’t slouch, use a footrest or rubber mat if standing for a long time, select appropriate and comfortable footwear
  - **Sitting** - don’t slouch, lower back support, proper chair selection
  - **Lying down** - select a mattress that doesn’t sag
Maintaining a Healthy Back

- Exercise
  - Go for a walk, bike ride, swim, jog, or another sport-
  ALWAYS maintain good posture throughout your exercise session
  - If you have a history of back trouble, check with your doctor before you begin any strenuous exercise
Maintaining a Healthy Back

- Eat Healthy
  - Stay at a healthy weight. Being overweight puts extra strain on your back. Select foods that are good for you and help you to keep your weight down.
REMEMBER
Your back is one of your greatest assets,
TAKE CARE OF IT!