

# SAFE

## MANUAL HANDLING & North East Physiotherapy



### Manual handling of water buckets



**Plan the task: is there a better way?**



North East Physiotherapy Services offers these timely tips to minimise the risk of injury from lugging litres of water to the garden:

- When lifting buckets or watering cans, remember to bend your knees, not your back. Never twist your body when your back is bent.
- When lifting, keep your feet apart and one slightly in front of the other.
- Never overfill your bucket. Only carry as much weight as you know you can lift comfortably. Half-fill buckets to lighten the load and help avoid wrist and shoulder pain.
- Distribute the load equally on each side of the body by using two lighter containers rather than one heavy bucket. Hint: rinse out and use 2-litre milk bottles for watering.
- Always carry buckets as close to your body as possible. Holding any weight away from your body increases the stress on your upper body and back.
- Place the bucket on a stool or chair when filling it, so you don't have to lift it up as far when it's filled.
- Keep the pathway where you are carrying the buckets free from trip hazards and choose the flattest path possible.
- Pay attention to where you place your feet, (it helps if you can actually see your feet), to avoid a stumble, and avoid wearing thongs or loose sandals.

Back injuries are most likely to occur if you move objects when the spine is bent forward and twisted at the same time. Fill containers at waist height, if possible. You should:

- Prepare your body by warming up and then doing some stretches **before** you lift and carry.
- Keep feet wide apart.
- Lower and lift using hips and knees not back.
- Maintain natural curve of back.

Do not:

- Twist your body while lifting.
- Lift with a bent back.
- Lift with a jerking or awkward action.

### **How can physiotherapy help?**

Physiotherapists are experts in human movement. They understand how your muscles, bones, joints, and ligaments work and how injuries occur. Today, Australian physiotherapists are leading world research into how muscles work to stabilise our backs. This research helps physiotherapists to give you good preventive programs and treatment. They can:

- Assess your muscle strength and fitness to design an appropriate fitness program.
- Teach you how to better handle loads.
- Show you how to prevent injury in your home or workplace.
- Treat muscle, joint, and ligament injuries to assist with a speedy recovery.



### **Why fitness helps**

Your physical condition is important. For example, stiff joints and muscles can reduce your ability to keep your back in a safe position as you lift. If your leg muscles are not very strong, you may find it harder to lift effectively. Poor fitness will cause your muscles to tire, placing more stress on the spine and other joints. Your Physiotherapist at North East Physiotherapy can advise you on the best way to improve your fitness. For expert advice on carrying loads safely, consult your local physiotherapist. Go to [www.nephysio.com.au](http://www.nephysio.com.au) to help you locate a physiotherapist in North East Victoria.

General fitness advice for older people and tips for gardening safely, are also available by following the links on the North East Physiotherapy website.