

SAFE

MANUAL HANDLING & North East Physiotherapy



The lifting and moving of objects is a common cause of pain and injury to your body. The low back is most often put at risk, but the neck and shoulders can also be injured. You can protect yourself against injury both at home and work by trying to eliminate the need for lifting and bending in the first place.

Principles of manual handling

Plan the task: is there a better way?

- Does the lift need to occur?
- Modify the lift by using equipment whenever possible.
- Ask another person to help.

THINK before you lift and try to reduce the:

- Need to lift below knee height or above shoulder height.
- Distance the load away from your body.
- Weight, shape, and size of the load.
- Number of times you are going to lift.
- Distance you are going to carry.
- Speed of your lift.

Back injuries are most likely to occur if you move objects when the spine is bent forward and twisted at the same time. Store heavy items or those used frequently at waist height. 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.

Make your work easier

- Keep objects that you move regularly between shoulder and mid-thigh height, so you don't have to bend down or lift above your shoulders.
- Always check the weight and stability of the load before you lift.
- Get help if necessary!
- Do not lift and carry heavy items! Use a trolley, hoist, crane, or forklift.
- Make sure the pathway is clear.
- Wear loose comfortable clothing and flat non-slip shoes.

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.

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