

## SUNY GENESEO BACK SAFETY



We often think of back safety as only being important for people in heavy physical jobs. The fact that back safety is important for all of us and not just at work, but at home and play as well. Instead of from a single injury, back problems often arise over time. This can be avoided by keeping your back healthy. Maintaining a healthy back involves good posture, proper lifting techniques, overall good health, and stress reduction.



The natural form of the spine consists of 3 curves. These are the cervical (neck), the thoracic (midback), and the lumbar (low back). Maintaining these 3 curves while sitting, moving and lifting allows your muscles to provide the best possible support and strength for your back. Good posture doesn't mean staying in one position all day, though. Your body is made to be in motion. Change position often to relieve muscle tension.



### **Think Before You Lift**

Is it safe for you to lift or should you get help? Should equipment be used such as a cart or dolly? Can the load be made smaller? Once you have the item lifted is there a clear path to where you are going? After you have considered the lift, use the following proper lifting techniques.

- **Step One:** Test the load to get an indication as to how heavy the object is by lifting slightly on one corner of the object. If the object is too heavy get assistance or use a cart
- **Step Two:** Stand close to the load with your feet wide apart



- **Step Three:** Squat down, bending at the hips and knees



- **Step Four:** Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift



- **Step Five:** Begin slowly lifting with your legs by straightening them. NEVER twist your body during this step.



- **Step Six:** Once the lift is complete, keep the load close to your body to prevent straining the lower back. If you must turn while carrying the load, turn using your feet, not your torso

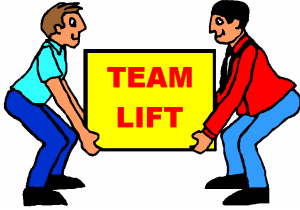


- **Step Seven:** To place the object below the level of your waist, follow the same procedures in reverse order.



## Alternatives to Lifting

For difficult lifting tasks, keep these options in mind:



- Ask a co-worker for help

- Use a cart but keep this in mind; pushing a load is easier on the back than pulling.  
When pushing a cart:

Stay close to the load  
Don't lean forward  
Use both arms



- If you must pull the cart:

Face the object squarely, with one foot at least  
12 inches in front of the other

Keep your back straight

Bend your knees slightly and pull  
in a smooth motion



## Safety Tips for Lifting

- Don't lift objects over your head
- Don't twist your body when lifting or setting an object down
- Don't reach over an obstacle to lift a load-move whatever is in the way or go around it
- Pace yourself to avoid fatigue when doing heavy work for a long period of time.

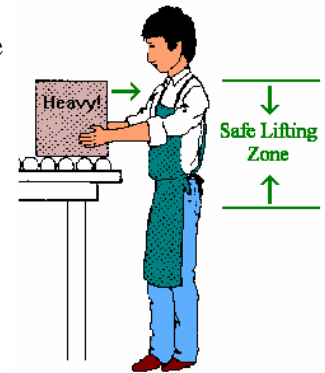
## Safety Tips at Workstations

Proper lifting is important for smaller lifts as well. At workstation keep things as close as possible to avoid reaching out or above the shoulders to lift heavy items such as binders and books. At workbenches keep tools close and use a vise or clamp to hold things while you work on them.

### Prevention

Avoid Lifting and bending whenever you can:

- Place objects off of the floor-store objects in the “neutral” zone
- Use carts, dollies, and other lifting devices
- Ask for assistance



### Back Belts: Do They Prevent Injury

- NIOSH review of scientific literature concludes that there is insufficient evidence that back belts reduce the risk of back injury
- Back belts can pose potential harmful effects associated with a false sense of security
- The most effective way to prevent back injury is to redesign work tasks and provide training to ID lifting hazards and use safe lifting techniques

**Questions/Concerns or if you would like back safety training for your staff, please contact Environmental Health and Safety x5812.**