



Southwest Washington Workers'
Compensation Trust

Caution! If I do this I could hurt my back.

Any time you do one of the following, you could injure your back.

- **Heavy lifting;** especially repetitive lifting over a long period of time.
- **Twisting at the waist while lifting;** moving objects like text books from one location to another while the feet remain in one position.
- **Reaching and lifting;** over your head, across a table, or from the back of a truck or trunk of a car.
- **Lifting or carrying awkward objects;** especially those that are heavy or have an odd shape, like boxes of books or a book shelf.
- **Working with poor body posture or in uncomfortable positions;** tasks that require you to bend for long periods of time, kneeling, sorting, packing or picking up objects from the floor.
- **Standing or sitting too long in one position;** sitting can be very hard on the lower back.

Follow these steps when lifting:

- Plan the task and be sure you can lift and carry the item safely.
- Place the object off the floor whenever you know that you or someone else will be lifting an object later. Place it on a table or other elevated surface.
- Use care when lowering or raising shelves. Store objects between knuckle and shoulder height. The heaviest objects should be stored at waist level.
- Take a balanced stance with your feet about shoulder-width apart and toes turned slightly outward. It is OK to put one foot behind the object and the other next to it.
- Bend at the knees. Squat down, but keep your heels off the floor. Get as close as you can to the object.
- Use your palms and not just your fingers to get a secure grip on the object. Make sure that this grip will hold and you will not have to switch your grip later.
- Lift slowly, without jerking, and use your leg, abdominal and buttock muscles while keeping the load as close to you as possible.
- Avoid twisting your body while lifting.
- Breathe while lifting to allow oxygen to reach your muscles.
- Once you are standing, don't twist when you change direction. Point your feet in the direction you want to go and then turn your whole body. Do not twist with the object while you are walking.
- To lower the load or place the object, use these same guidelines in reverse.

Follow these tips to reduce your risk of injury on and off the job.