

CORRECT LIFTING AND OFFICE ERGONOMICS



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It is widely known that heavy lifting can cause back pain. However, repeated stress on the back, bending/twisting, and pushing/pulling also increase the risk for back pain. So how do we lower these risks?

CORRECT LIFTING TECHNIQUES:

- Per OSHA, one person should lift no more than 50 pounds by themselves. If something weighs more than that, use a device (forklift, hand truck, etc.) or have another person help with the lift.
- Before you lift, check the weight & shape of the object to be lifted. Warm up by stretching your back and legs. Look around and make sure the path you'll be taking is clear, so you don't trip while carrying the load. Finally, make sure you can see over the load.
- Whenever possible, large objects should be taken apart. It's better for your back to make a couple of trips with small objects than to try and carry a large/heavy object.
- To limit the risk of strenuous tasks, take breaks and time to stretch throughout the day.
- Don't lift objects that are above shoulder height. Use a footstool or ladder to get high enough that they are below your shoulders. Then pull the load to you and hold it close while getting down.
- Carry heavy loads close to the body. This allows your legs to do the work. Always lift with your legs and arms, not your back. Make sure to have a good grip on the object. Don't lift with only a couple of fingers.
- When you lift, make sure to keep breathing. Don't hold your breath.
- When you can, slide heavy loads instead of lifting them. Likewise, pushing heavy objects is easier on the back than pulling them.
- If you work at a station, make sure your tools are where you can reach them without having to twist or turn.

When you work at a desk all day, proper ergonomics is important to prevent neck/back pain and sore hands/arms. So how do you do this?

CORRECT OFFICE ERGONOMICS:

- Use a chair that supports your entire spine. Pay close attention to the lumbar support. Your chair should be at a height where your feet can rest flat on the floor. If that's not possible, use a footrest.
- Place your keyboard and mouse so that your wrists are straight and your arms are supported close to your body. Hands should be a little bit lower than your wrists.
- According to the Mayo Clinic, your monitor should be no closer than 20" and not further away than 40". The screen should be at or slightly lower than eye level. Lower your monitor 1-2" for bifocals.
- If you work on a laptop, try using an external keyboard/mouse and raise the laptop to proper monitor height.
- To prevent strain, arrange your desk to keep the things you use most close to you. Don't lean over to get items that are out of reach. Stand up to get them.
- Get up and move at least once an hour, change positions in your chair frequently, and stretch your hands and arms periodically throughout the day to prevent strain.

SOURCES:

- <https://ehs.stanford.edu/topic/ergonomics/safe-lifting>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/office-ergonomics/art-20046169>
- <https://media.clemson.edu/research/safety/ergonomics/Lifting%20and%20Back%20Safety%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>