

Avoiding Lifting Injuries

CTSI has seen a recent increase in back injuries and muscle strains related to lifting heavy objects, often as a result of office moves or cleanouts. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, back injuries account for one of every five work-place injuries or illnesses, with more than one million occurring each year. Using proper lifting techniques can cut down on these injuries.

Before lifting an object, know where you will put it and have a clear path to that destination. The Mayo Clinic recommends the following (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/multimedia/back-pain/sls-20076866>)

- **Start in a safe position** – when lifting an object from the floor, stand close to the object and kneel, resting one knee on the floor. Do not lift from standing, bend from the waist, or lock your knees.
- **Maintain the natural curve in your lower back** - With one knee resting on the floor, tighten your core muscles and lift the object between your legs. You can rest the objects on your knee as you start to stand. Don't hold your breath and keep the object close to your body.
- **Use your legs** - Use your leg muscles — not your back — to lift the object. Step to the side if you need to turn. Don't twist when lifting.
- **Squatting instead of kneeling** - As another option, squat rather than kneel on one knee to lift an object from the floor. Stand as close to the object as possible, positioning it between your knees as you squat. Keep your feet parallel, or stagger one foot ahead of the other. It might help to tilt one edge of the box up to ensure a firm hold.
- **Let your legs do the work** - As you stand, be careful to hold the object close to your body. Maintain the natural curve in your lower back and keep your core muscles tight. Use your leg muscles — not your back — to lift the object.
- **Avoid twisting** - When you're standing and ready to move, continue holding the object close to your body to decrease the strain on your lower back. Turn by pivoting your feet, not your back. Keep your core muscles tight.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

When possible, lifting heavy objects and office moves should be done by trained professionals. County employees who need to move heavy items should use proper lifting techniques and take advantage of mechanical assistance like dollies or lift with a partner. The CTSI Training Library offers the films “To the Point About: Preventing Back Injuries” and “Move it Safely: Avoiding Injury While Moving Materials” for county employees. For more information, contact CTSI at 303 861 0507.