

- If the job entails standing, stand straight. Avoid bending at your waist. For prolonged standing, use a low footstool for alternate resting of your legs and for changing position. Wear comfortable, supportive shoes.
- When walking, maintain an erect posture and wear slip-resistant, supportive shoes. Most slips, trips, and falls can be prevented by wearing quality workshoes with slip-resistant heels and soles.
- When carrying heavy objects, carry them close to the body and avoid carrying them in one hand.
- When heavy or bulky objects need to be moved, obtain help or use a mechanical aid such as a dolly, hand truck, or forklift.
- When stepping down from a height of more than eight inches, step down backward, not forward.

## Lifting Theories and Techniques

There are numerous lifting theories and techniques. The most common and most frequently promoted is the "straight-back, lift with your legs approach." But after decades of promotion and training this approach to lifting has not been widely accepted by workers, and there is little or no evidence that it has reduced the number or severity of injuries.

In more recent years, numerous other theories and techniques have been promoted, criticized, and discarded. There are hip-flexing, kinetic lifting, stooped posture and pelvic-tilt techniques, among others, all of which have both positive and negative considerations. Presently, however, there is no one, best, lifting method for all lifts.

Basically, there are seven rules for safe lifting which have been developed over the years. Some of these are similar to rules of the past; others are new and different. They are presented below:

- **Lift comfortably.** Choose the position that feels best, with or without a straight back.
- **Avoid unnecessary bending.** Do not place objects on the floor if they must be picked up again later.
- **Avoid unnecessary twisting.** Turn your feet, not your hips or shoulders. Leave enough room to shift your feet to avoid twisting.
- **Avoid reaching out.** Handle heavy objects close to the body. Avoid a long reach to pick up an object.
- **Avoid excessive weights.** If the load is too heavy, get help or use a mechanical device, if possible.
- **Lift gradually.** Lift slowly, smoothly, and without jerking.
- **Keep in good physical shape.** Get proper exercise and maintain a good diet.

## At-Home Modifications

Sprains, strains and lower back pain on the job can be partially caused by practices at home. Some recommendations are:

- Maintain a reasonable weight, eat nutritious meals and exercise to maintain well-conditioned muscles.
- Sleep on a firm mattress and avoid sleeping on your stomach. When sleeping on your side or back, bend your knees. Place a pillow under your head, another between or beneath your knees.
- When you awake, remember that your muscles are still at rest. Gradually stretch your leg, arm, back, and stomach muscles before getting up. Do some more stretching exercises after you are out of bed. Some exercises are provided in the following section. Early morning is the recommended time for these exercises, but any time of the day is better than not at all. More important than the time of the day is the development of a regular exercise program. This is particularly important for individuals who do limited physical work, but a regular exercise program is also valuable for all individuals.

## Think Before You Lift

There is one final important rule: **Think before you lift.** It is better for workers to use their own common sense than to teach them specific lifting, pushing, pulling, walking, climbing, or jumping procedures. This is not to imply that unsafe behaviors should not be pointed out to others and corrected. For example, "common sense" may tell certain people to jump down from heights of several feet. Certainly, when people exhibit this type of behavior, or when they attempt to carry objects that are too heavy or too bulky, the errors of their behavior should be brought to their attention. Remember, you are the major cause of your injuries.

## Improving Your Physical Condition

There are some recommended exercises to strengthen and increase the flexibility of important muscle groups, particularly in the back, abdomen, and legs. These exercises are **not** designed to increase endurance, strengthen the heart or improve circulation. To accomplish such goals, aerobic exercises are required, such as fast-pace walking, jogging, dancing, or swimming.

The exercises (pages 3-4) **are** designed to increase flexibility, and strengthen and condition your muscles; they need not be exhausting.

*However, as with any exercise program, it is recommended that they be conducted with the approval of your physician. If any pain develops and persists, medical attention should be sought immediately.*