



AmTrust North America
An AmTrust Financial Company

Safety Zone

Ergonomics – Back Basics

You can help keep your back healthy and even prevent some injuries with regular exercise, good posture, and a healthy diet. However, following proper material-handling techniques further reduces your risk of injury.

Back injuries occur because of unsafe acts. These acts include twisting, overreaching, and incorrect lifting techniques, including lifting with a sudden exertion of effort.

Moveable bone structures called vertebrae and discs make up your backbone. Discs act as shock absorbers between each vertebra. Think of discs as a doughnut with jelly inside. Too much pressure on one side can burst a disc. Ligaments and muscles help keep the back aligned in three curves and support these curves. Correct alignment for your backbone occurs when the natural curves of your back let your ears, shoulders, and hips remain in a straight line. When your back's three curves are out of alignment, you may experience both back pain and injury.

Avoid overloading your back by using good lifting techniques.

- First, test the weight to be sure you can lift it.
- Next, bend your knees.
- Then, while hugging the object close as you lift, keep your back in alignment.
- Let your stronger thigh muscles do the lifting, not your lower back.
- To maintain your center of balance, do not twist or overreach.

When lifting, it is important to keep your back in balance. Your back's alignment and the center of balance in your abdominal cavity change when you bend at the waist or extend your upper body to lift. Overloading your back forces your spine to support the weight of your body plus the weight of the object you lift.

Safe lifting means protecting your back while lifting. Before lifting anything, evaluate the lift by asking yourself these questions.

- Can I lift the load alone?
- Do I need help?
- Is the load too big or too awkward?
- Can I break the load down into smaller loads?

When you lift, hug the load close to your body. Never overexert. Remember, do not twist while lifting. Instead, move one foot at a time in the direction you want to go and then turn with your leg muscles. If you use these techniques, lifting will be easier and you can avoid back pain and injury.

If you have to lift an object above shoulder level, use a stepstool or safety ladder to avoid overreaching. Test the weight of a load before removing it from a shelf. If the load is less than 25 pounds or so, slide it toward you and hug it close to your body as you descend the ladder. If possible, hand the load down to a co-worker.

Reaching into a bin, container, or other storage area to lift can make lifts much harder. If you must lift this way, keep your feet shoulder distance apart, bend your knees slightly, and bend at your hips, not from your waist. As you lift, tighten your abdominal muscles. If needed, place your knees against the container for more support.

If a load is too heavy, ask for help. One back injury can change your life forever.

Are You In The Zone?

1. Why do back injuries occur?
2. Correct alignment occurs when the natural curves of your back let your _____, _____, and _____ remain in a straight line.
3. Why is it important to keep your back in balance?
4. Safe lifting means _____.
5. When you lift an object above your shoulder level, use _____.
6. What should you do if you reach into a bin?
7. What should you do if the load is too heavy?

I have received information on Back Basics.

Employee Name: _____ Date: _____

For additional information and resources on this topic and other safety and risk management subjects be sure to visit the Loss Control section on our website:

<https://www.amtrustgroup.com/small-business-insurance/claims/prevention>

AmTrust distributes this e-newsletter as a service for its customers. It is provided in the spirit of professionals sharing their work with each other. The information provided in this document is intended for use as a guideline and is not intended as, nor does it constitute, legal or professional advice. It is not intended to provide authoritative answers to safety and health questions. AmTrust does not warrant that adherence to, or compliance with, any recommendations, best practices, checklists or guidelines will result in a particular outcome. Before using the information here, the accuracy and appropriateness of the information to your specific situation should be verified by a person qualified to assess all the factors involved.

CONTACT INFO:

PHONE: 888.486.7466 ext. 363275
WEB: www.amtrustnorthamerica.com
EMAIL: lcinfo@amtrustgroup.com

MAILING ADDRESS:

AmTrust North America
Loss Control
2605 Enterprise Road, Suite 290
Clearwater, FL 33759