



SAFETY TALK

Safe Lifting: Protecting your back

It is said that the spine is the most commonly injured structure in the body. Safe lifting procedures are crucial for everyone—no matter what industry you work in. Over time, repeated injury to the spine causes degeneration—which is the painful aging of spinal bones, discs, tendons and cartilage. Do not take your spine health for granted, as aging will prove to be painful. Always stop and think before bending to pick up an object and over time safe lifting techniques should become a habit. Take care of your back.

Identify Controls

- Don't try to catch falling objects. Your muscles may not have time to coordinate properly to protect your spine.
- Push rather than pull. Pushing lets you maintain the normal curves in your back and puts less stress on the spine.
- Be extra careful when lifting above shoulder height. This causes your back to arch and puts lots of stress on your shoulders and spine.

Before Lifting....

Two-Person Lift

Partners should be roughly the same height. Before the lift, partners should agree on:

- The type of lift. (waist-high, shoulder-high etc).
- Who will take charge of the lift.
- How they will lower the load.

While Lifting

- Get as close to the load as possible.
- Put yourself in the best position for the lift.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as you start to lift.
- Use a well-balanced stance with one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Avoid reaching, bending or twisting. This puts enormous weight on the lower spine.
- Change direction with your feet, do not twist.
- Bend at the knees and grip the object with the palm of your hands and fingers. The palm grip is more secure.
- Use your legs to lift. The muscles in your legs are stronger than your back muscles.
- Lower the load using your legs. You can injure your back just as easily when lowering the load as you can lifting it.



Safe lifting starts with planning;

- Size up the load.
- Make sure the path is clear.
- Create a place to set the load down.
- Ask a co-worker or Home Depot Associate for help if you need it.
- Use smaller Home Depot Garden Centre shopping carts if necessary to move larger planters/