



## The basics of safe lifting and handling

Back pain and related problems are caused by many things, including:

- Physically heavy work
- Manual handling (lifting and shifting things by hand, rather than using lifting equipment)
- Sudden, unexpected physical loads
- Frequent bending and twisting
- Working in a position for a long time (including sitting)
- Poor posture
- Low physical conditioning and fitness
- Stress and lack of “time out” to recharge

The improper lifting and movement of materials is responsible for a large percent of accidents and injuries among Child Care Center workers. This alert serves as an educational supplement and a reminder to you and your employees to use care while manually handling materials. Proper methods of lifting and manual handling protect against injury and make work more efficient. Think about what you are going to do before bending to lift an object. Safe lifting techniques should become a habit over time.

**The following are the basics of safe lifting and handling:**

- **Size up the load and check overall conditions.** Don't attempt the lift by yourself if the load appears to be too heavy or awkward. Make sure there is enough space for movement, and that the footing is good. “Good housekeeping” helps ensure you won't trip or stumble over an obstacle.
- **Make certain your balance is good.** Your feet should be shoulder width apart, with one foot *beside* and the other foot *behind* the object to be lifted.
- **Bend the knees; don't stoop. Keep the back straight, but not vertical.** (There is a difference. Tucking in the chin straightens the back.)
- **Grip the load with the palms of your hands and your fingers.** The palm grip is much more secure. Tuck in the chin again to make sure your back is straight before starting to lift.
- **Use your body weight to start the load moving, and then lift by pushing up with the legs.** This makes full use of the strongest set of muscles.

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- **Keep the arms and elbows close to the body while lifting.**
- **Carry the load close to the body.** Don't twist your body while carrying the load. To change direction, shift your foot position and turn your whole body.
- **Watch where you are going!**
- **To lower the object, bend the knees. Don't stoop.** To deposit the load on a bench or shelf, place it on the edge and push it into position. Make sure your hands and feet are clear when placing the load.

### Lifting Toddlers

- **Avoid bending from the waist** to reach children or objects located at ground level.
- **Squat with feet shoulder width apart, keeping your back straight, and pushing your buttocks out** to bring yourself as close to the child as possible, while holding the child securely.
- **Tighten stomach muscles and look forward**, and use your thigh muscles to raise yourself while breathing out as you lift.

### Additional Lifting Tips

- **Lower the sides of cribs** when lifting/lowering a child.
- **Avoid bending down at the waist to interact with children.** Use a squatting or kneeling position instead.
- **Store frequently used or heavy items** in an easily accessible area and at waist height.
- **If possible when sitting on the floor**, sit against a wall or furniture to support your back.
- **Minimize repetitive bending and stooping** when cleaning up toys, etc. Rather, incorporate this into children's clean up time.

Utica National has a wide array of materials available to help you control these types of losses at your Child Care Center. Visit us online at [www.uticanational.com](http://www.uticanational.com) or contact your local Risk Management Representative for more information.

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