

Maintaining a Healthy Back



Keep your spine in a natural, healthy position with your ears, shoulders, and hips in line. During any lifting activity, maintain this posture.



Lifting from overhead

If a load is above your shoulders, use a step stool to elevate yourself so the load is at least chest level (preferably waist height). Pull the object close to your body and then lift—keeping your posture and lift with your legs.

Lifting heavy/large objects

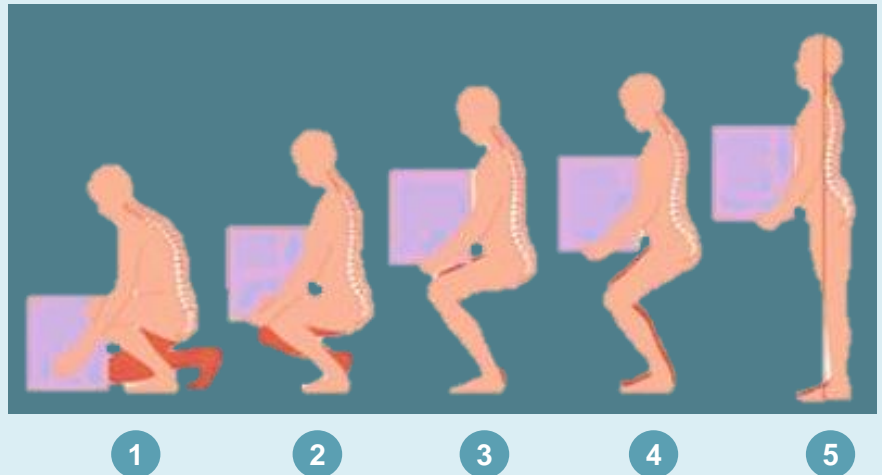
If a load is too heavy to lift alone, ask for help. Pick one person to coach the lift — this way you lift and lower at the same time.

Lifting while maintaining posture

Lifting is strenuous— it requires proper conditioning and technique. By lifting with your leg muscles instead of the small muscles of your back you can prevent back injuries and reduce low back pain.

There are five steps to follow when lifting an object:

- 1. Get close to the load**
Get as close to the load as possible, as if you're hugging it. Having it close to your body puts less force on your lower back
- 2. Maintain your posture**
Keep yourself in an upright position while squatting to pick up
- 3. Tighten your stomach muscles**
Tightening the stomach helps support the spine. *Don't hold your breath while tightening the muscles*
- 4. Lift with your legs**
Your legs are the strongest muscles in your body - use them
- 5. Pivot, don't twist**
Turn with your feet, not your back. It isn't built for twisting from side to side.



**This information is not intended as a substitute for medical professional advice rather to be used as an aid to better understand how to reduce risks contributed to back and neck pain. A physician should be consulted for medical advice.*

Source: Office of Research Services, Division of Safety, National Institutes of Health

