

## **TOOLBOX TALK #1**

### **LIFT IT SAFELY**

Lifting items the safe way can help prevent work-related back pain. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) lays out five steps for safe lifting. In order:

1. Move close to the object.
2. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
3. Bend at the knees.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles.
5. Lift with your leg muscles as you stand up.



Is the object too heavy or an awkward shape? Don't attempt to lift it by yourself. Ask a coworker to help you. The size and weight of the item also matter. If the item is light, AAOS says you should:

- Lean over the object.
- Slightly bend one knee and extend the other leg behind you.
- Hold onto a nearby chair or table for support as you reach down to pick up the item.

On the other hand, if you're going to lift something heavy, you should:

- Move close to the object.
- Bend at the knees.
- Lift with your leg muscles. Don't bend at your waist.

Once you've picked up the item, keep your knees slightly bent to maintain your balance while keeping the item close to you. AAOS says, if you have to move the object to one side, avoid twisting your body. Point your toes in the direction you want to move and pivot in that direction.

When placing an item that you're carrying onto a shelf, AAOS recommends you step close to the shelf, spread your feet in a wide stance and place one foot in front of the other to give you a solid base of support. Then slightly extend your arms to place the item onto the shelf. The academy advises against leaning forward or fully extending your arms in front of you while holding the object.

Is the shelf too high? AAOS has advice for that too. Lift the object chest-high, keep your elbows at your side, and position your hands so you can push the object up and onto the shelf.