

## Fitness and Exercise

At work you can do warm-up exercises at the start of the day, after breaks, and before any lifting jobs.

At home you can take part in a fitness and exercise routine that will increase your muscle strength and flexibility.

Common back exercises recommended by your doctor or health expert will assist you in preventing or rehabilitating a sore or injured back.

Even lifting an infant from a crib several times a day or night can lead to back strain or injury. A minor muscle spasm in your back can prevent you from tying your shoes. Take care at home so you can make it to work each day—and vice versa!

When working on manual jobs around the home, be sure to bend at the knees. Don't overexert—take a break between stages of strenuous jobs.

Choose exercises that are right for you. Try lying flat on your back while doing breathing exercises, pelvic tilts, or other exercises that strengthen abdominal and back muscles. Join a fitness program and get professional advice.

Encourage your family to follow your good example!



## An Important Role

Good housekeeping, proper planning of material movements, and a good safety attitude are great assets on the jobsite.

Take care to lift properly. Also, assist others to develop good material handling methods. You have an important role to play in the safety system.

For more information, refer to current applicable Occupational Health and Safety Legislation.

**The Alberta Construction Safety Association's** mission is to



provide quality advice and education for the construction industry that will reduce human suffering and financial costs associated with workplace incidents. This brochure is part of a series, **The Toolbox Brochures**, which are available on a variety of safety topics. If you have any questions or comments please contact:

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# Manual Lifting



## Making Safety A Way Of Life



## The Alberta Construction Safety Association

## Safe Handling for Good Health

Keeping your good health is the key to enjoying your life. With a “healthy” safety attitude on the job, you will avoid minor and major injuries.

Back injuries that occur while handling materials or lifting on the job are very common. Research shows that one quarter of all Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB) claims are for back injuries.

Don’t become a statistic—follow the basic safety steps that will prevent injuries and keep you on the job.

## Sprains and Strains

Most back injuries are sprains and strains. Don’t overexert yourself. Overexertion, especially from lifting heavy objects, causes many back injuries. Don’t “break your back.” Get help when lifting or moving materials. Use equipment that will help you do the job efficiently.

Don’t get caught in a situation where you must rush or work alone—get all hands “on deck” and the job will be done well with reduced chances of injury for everyone.



## Serious about Safety

Back injuries and other incidents that occur while lifting can be easily prevented. Before manual lifting is done by a worker, the employer must perform a hazard assessment that considers the weight, size, and shape of the load and the number of times and manner in which the load will be moved. Use the proper methods, equipment, and work procedures. Injuries that occur when lifting can be caused by:

- Pushing or pulling too hard
- Slipping, tripping, stretching, or twisting

When you’re in motion on the job, take care to avoid hazards. Don’t push yourself beyond your strength. Learn efficient methods with your co-workers. Your supervisor will recognize a job that has been done safely.

## Time and Effort

Many construction workers spend one quarter or more of their days handling materials. Be sure to take some time to plan the best methods for moving items. Remember:

- Where possible, eliminate the manual task—move items by some other method.
- Break or divide the material into smaller loads for easier transport.
- Use dollies, hoists, forklifts, pallets, and other tools to do the job more efficiently.

## Protect Yourself

Always wear appropriate PPE when handling and moving materials. Gloves, coveralls, and safety boots are standard gear. Check to see if the materials are hazardous, and wear additional equipment if needed.

## Everyone Knows Better

We all know that we should take care and use proper techniques when lifting or doing physical work. We also know we shouldn’t overexert ourselves. Do the right thing for yourself:

- Reduce the weight of the load.
- Get help: have a “team” of workers share the lift.
- Store materials at or above hip height—this reduces the need for bending.
- Use carts, ropes, forklifts, and other tools to assist you.
- Minimize the distance needed to carry items—plan your storage and movements properly.
- Transfer the weight of the load to stronger parts of your body using handgrips, straps, or belts.
- Reduce twisting of your body; keep loads in front of you; turn by moving your feet, not your body.
- Don’t swing and throw heavy loads.
- Minimize bending to lift or shift a load—and don’t bend or twist to the side when carrying material.

## Most Important

The best way to lift and reduce the strain on your back is to use the “squat” technique. Bending at the knees with your back straight and your head up allows you to transfer more of the weight to your legs.

