



## Proper Lifting

Proper lifting is one approach to reducing back injuries in a manual material lifting environment. But before we discuss proper lifting, let's first ask a question: Does this lift need to occur at all?

Lifts from the floor, for instance, can be accomplished with the use of a rack or shelving system. A pallet lift is another way to eliminate lifts from the floor.

If you determine that a lift is, indeed, necessary then it's time to talk about proper lifting technique. It all starts with good body mechanics and, perhaps, a willingness to change. We've all heard the phrase "use your legs and not your back." The image of a worker squatting and keeping the back straight comes to mind. But often the worker can't get themselves up from this position, let alone a box, too.

Proper technique requires the worker to use their legs but also their large core trunk muscles. Here are the steps for a proper lift:

- The inward curve of the low back should be maintained by contracting the body's core to include the back and abdominal muscles.
- The head remains up and in line with the trunk.
- The knees should bend but not to complete flexion where the calf is touching the back of the thigh.
- Lead with the head to initiate the lift upward. A good visualization is placing a cup of liquid in your breast pocket and squatting to pick something up without spilling the liquid from the cup. Keep your behind low and your head high. Your head should never be at, or below, the level of your behind.

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[RiskControl@PayneWest.com](mailto:RiskControl@PayneWest.com)



