

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Safe Manual Handling

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SAFE MANUAL HANDLING

More than a quarter of all accidents are associated with manual handling. Whilst these accidents involve many parts of the body, back injuries are common and often the most serious. As many as 4 out of 5 people will suffer back pain at some time in their lives and millions of working days are lost each year in the U.K. due to back injuries

Your back lets you do many things. So think what a back injury could mean to you: pain, inconvenience and possible disability which may affect your income or future job prospects. The Council loses your valuable service if you are absent and may perhaps have to find a temporary replacement as well as pay you.

The message is clear:

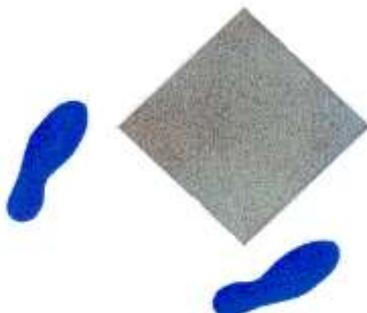
IT PAYS TO PROTECT YOUR BACK FROM FATIGUE, STRAIN AND INJURY.

This short guide cannot show you how to lift and carry in every circumstance you will come across. There is no single lifting technique that is best for all situations. Lifting techniques must be personalised for each individual according to their body size and the characteristics of the task. What this guide can do is remind you the key principles for lifting and carrying and some of the pitfalls to be avoided.

GOOD LIFTING TECHNIQUE

- **Think before doing anything:**

- have you had any training?
- has a risk assessment been made?
- can you manage the lift and carry?
- is a team lift better?
- are there any mechanical aids to help you?
- is the route clear to pick up and put down the load?
- do you need to change your grip, for example, in a lift from floor to shoulder height?



- **Position your feet**

Stand as close to the load as possible, spread your feet to provide a stable base (tight skirts and unsuitable footwear make this difficult).

Place your leading leg as far forward as is comfortable and if possible pointing in the direction you wish to go.

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- **Adopt a good posture**

Relax and bend your knees (bending and twisting on a rigid leg concentrates stress in your lower back and hip) Keep your back straight, maintaining its natural curve, but it does not necessarily have to be upright. Lean forward a little over the load if necessary to get a good grip



- **Get a firm grip**

Grasp the load firmly, get a full palm grip if the shape and size of the load allows. Lift with your leg muscles. Breathe in as you lift and look up, this will help straighten your back. Move your feet, don't twist at the waist. The lift should be smooth and co-ordinated using leverage, balance and momentum. Hold the load closely, heaviest side to your body.

REMEMBER:

BENDING AND TWISTING ON RIGID LEGS CONCENTRATES STRESS IN THE HIPS AND LOWER BACK.

ALL MOVEMENTS SHOULD START IN THE KNEES AND FEET, NOT IN THE HEAD AND UPPER BODY.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR CARRYING

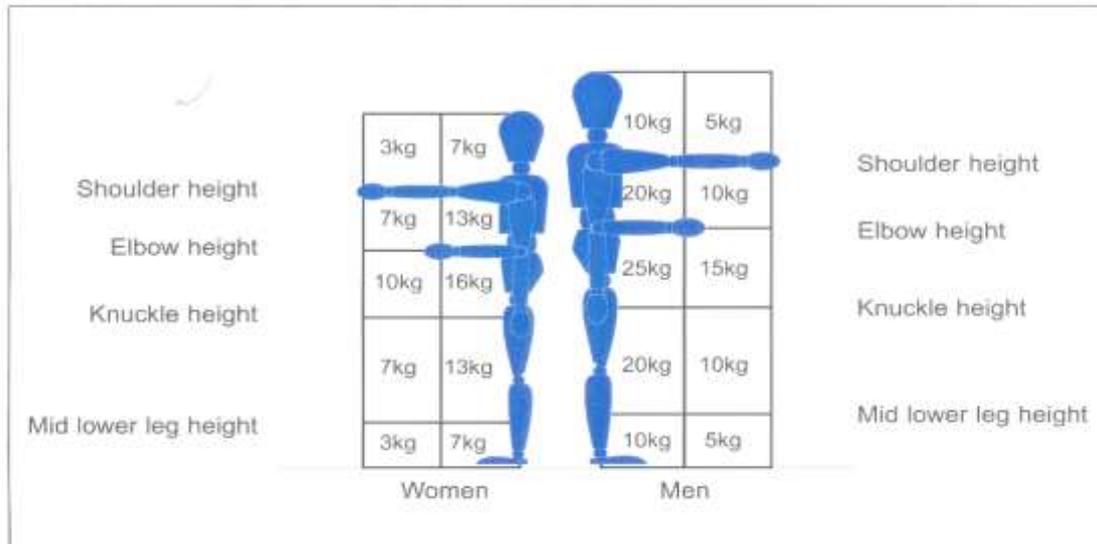
- Keep the load as close to your body as possible.
- Don't block your vision by trying to carry too large a load
- Face the direction of travel, avoid twisting your body.
- Move your feet to change direction.

Keep your arms tucked in to reduce fatigue on your neck and shoulder muscles.

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Getting to grips with manual handling

General risk assessment guidelines



- Each box in the diagram above shows guideline weights for lifting and lowering.
- **The risk assessment guidelines are not safe limits for lifting.** But work outside the guidelines is likely to increase the risk of injury, so you should examine it closely for possible improvements. You should remember that you must make the work less demanding if it's reasonably practicable to do so.
- Any operation involving more than twice the guideline weights should be rigorously assessed even for very fit, well-trained individuals working under favourable conditions.
- Observe the activity and compare to the diagram. If the lifter's hands enter more than one box during the operation, use the smallest weight. Use an in between weight if the hands are close to a boundary between boxes. If the operation must take place with the hands beyond the boxes, make a more detailed assessment.
- The weights assume that the load is readily grasped with both hands.
- The operation takes place in reasonable working conditions with the lifter in a stable body position.
- Reduce the guideline weights if the lifter twists to the side during the operation. As a rough guide, reduce them by 10% if the handler twists beyond 45⁰, and by 20% if the handler twists beyond 90⁰.

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- The guideline weights are for infrequent operations - up to about 30 operations per hour - where the pace of work is not forced, adequate pauses to rest or use different muscles are possible, and the load is not supported for any length of time. Reduce the weights if the operation is repeated more often. As a rough guide, reduce the weights by 30% if the operation is repeated five to eight times a minute; and by 80% where the operation is repeated more than 12 times a minute.
- There is no such thing as a completely 'safe' manual handling operation. But working within the guidelines will cut the risk and reduce the need for a more detailed assessment.

MAKING A MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT

If the manual handling operation falls outside the guidelines then a more detailed assessment should be made.

The checklist should be used to identify the hazardous elements of each manual handling operation under the headings **task, load, environment** and **individual capability**.

It is acceptable to do a generic assessment that is common to several employees, of similar ability, or to more than one site or type of work.

Using the same headings consider the steps that can be taken either to remove the hazard or to reduce the risk associated with it to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

Establish priorities for action and periodically review your assessments.

Training is important, but it is no substitute for other risk reduction steps such as improvements to the task, load or working environment. Training should cover systems of work, use of mechanical aids, good lifting technique and how to recognise harmful manual handling.

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More Detailed Assessment Checklist

Questions to consider	If yes, tick appropriate level of risk			Problems occurring from the task (Make rough notes in this column in preparation for the possible remedial action to be taken)	Possible remedial action (Changes to system/task, load, workplace/space, environment, training and information)
	Low	Med	High		
The tasks - do they involve: holding loads away from trunk? twisting? stooping? reaching upwards? large vertical movement? long carrying distances? strenuous pushing or pulling? unpredictable movement of loads? repetitive handling? insufficient rest or recovery? a work rate imposed by a process?					
The loads - are they: heavy? bulky/unwieldy? difficult to grasp? unstable/unpredictable? intrinsically harmful (eg sharp/hot)?					
Individual capability - does the job: require unusual capability? hazard those with a health problem? hazard those who are pregnant? call for special information/training?					
Other factors: Is movement or posture hindered by clothing or personal protective equipment?	Yes/No				