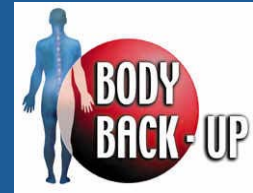


# Good lifting Health & Safety

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## Fear of hurting yourself

For years, the wise words from Health & Safety on sensible lifting techniques have been:

- "Keep your back straight"
- "Let your legs do the work!"
- "Bend your knees!"

Is this always true?

We should be taught to be more aware of how we achieve this and why.

When you hear "Keep your back straight, etc..." what does this really mean? -

A straight back, that is well supported by flexible back muscles will safely lift reasonable weights - providing the leg, knee and buttock muscles all work together in a co-ordinated way.



## How do problems arise?



### Too fast

If the lift is done too quickly, the muscle groups don't get a chance to help each other to share the load in an ordered fashion.

### Too cold

Construction workers, for example, who are working outdoors in all weathers – where low air and body temperatures may cause muscles to work inefficiently and thereby not fully protect spinal joints and spinal discs.

The impact of this, repeatedly over a period of time, is likely to cause damage.

## Varied functions

- Problems can occur for the worker who has various job functions – sitting for part of the day at a desk, but helping out in-between in the warehouse, lifting and shifting deliveries.
- Hunched over the desk operating the VDU stiffens up the upper back, even when all the work station 'health rules' are followed!
- Because these are the same muscle groups that hold the 'back' straight for lifting and run the entire length of the spine from the neck, upper back and lower back, switching them suddenly from inaction to action can be a chancy move.

## Knowing your body

- If the spine and muscles of the upper back and neck are stiff from sitting they may not be able to contribute their flexibility & strength to the lower Lumbar spine curves.
- This mechanically may produce a poor spinal position for safe lifting.
- Remedial advice & Osteopathic intervention might be a good preventative step before the beginning of acute pain, for anyone who carries out a variety of diverse tasks, to check the spine is able to transfer from task to task with ease.
- Our Osteopathic evaluation aims to understand the history and underlying issues of your problem, and then helps you understand why you have the symptoms and how to prevent them from reoccurring.
- Effective remedial action and advice will also make a future episode less likely!



## Back mechanics

- The back straightening process involves flattening the upper back curves and reducing the lower back hollow.
- Mechanically this would prepare the back for a lift from the ground, or a lift from a higher work surface level.
- If you are bending slowly to pick up a light item, you may repeatedly hold your back 'rigid', out of fear of a back injury, over time this can cause a loss of flexibility and produce a back that is less able to cope with changing demands or a healthy lifting workload.
- Maintaining good mobility will help keep muscles healthy and the spine safe!
- **Robin Lansman** is an osteopath practising in London & Berkshire and a lecturer in Sports Injuries & Clinical Rehabilitation at the British School of Osteopathy in London.
- He runs seminars on workplace safety and recently ran a workshop for the London area 'Workplace' Group.
- As a result, the DWP has backed a London-wide initiative in conjunction with the General Osteopathic Council in which Osteopaths will host seminars for Jobcentre Plus staff on "health in the workplace" and osteopathic care.

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