

Around 22% of all injuries at work are caused during manual handling activities¹. Most of the injuries are to hands, feet, legs and back. Some of the back injuries have resulted in serious injury or even permanent disability.

Although there are no legal limits specified in the Manual Handling Operations Regulations for the weight that can be lifted at work, 20-25kg (44-55lb) is considered heavy for most people.

Take care of yourself by following the guidance notes given below:-

- If mechanical handling equipment is available and you are authorised and trained to use it, then do so, e.g. fork lift trucks, trolleys etc.
- Wear the right protective equipment for the job e.g. gloves, safety shoes.
- Know your physical capabilities and only tackle jobs you can reasonably handle.
- Think the job through:-
 1. Can you handle the load by yourself?
 2. Is the route to be travelled while carrying:
 - a. too far?
 - b. clear of other hazards, e.g. trip hazards, stairs?
 - c. properly lit?
 3. The shape and size of the load, can it be carried safely?
 4. Is there a safe stacking area?
 5. Will timber packing be required between the articles when stacked?
 6. Seek advice on height restrictions for stacks. Remember, it is often more dangerous de-stacking than stacking.
- Always check that the weight of the load is known before lifting.
- Know the correct lifting technique before attempting a lift:-
 1. Use lifting belts where applicable.
 2. Stand reasonably close to the load, be sure footing is firm and feet are about 300mm apart.
 3. Squat down by bending the knees, keeping the back as straight as you can.
 4. Place hands where they will not slip, and grip firmly.
 5. To assist in strengthening the back, raise the head before the lift.
 6. Breathe in before lifting - inflating the lungs helps support the spine.
 7. Straighten up with the legs, keeping the back as straight as you can
 8. Hold the load firmly and close to the body.
 9. Ensure your view is not impeded by the load whilst working with it.
 10. Lift slowly and smoothly. Avoid jerking motions.

When two or more persons lift a load, one of the team must be nominated to give instruction to ensure that each person lifts an equal share and the team work together.

¹ RIDDOR statistics 2016/17