Strains at School – Proper Lifting Techniques Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Let’s talk about something we all do every day, often without a second thought: lifting. But when we don’t lift properly, especially here at school with all of the moving of supplies, helping with equipment, and even just shifting things around in our classrooms, we put ourselves at risk for some pretty uncomfortable – and sometimes serious – strains. Taking a few moments to understand the right way to lift can make a huge difference in how we feel at the end of the day and in the long run. We want to keep healthy and able to do our best work, and that starts with protecting our bodies from unnecessary strain.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Think about all the things we lift and move around during a typical school day. It could be boxes of books, stacks of papers, sports equipment, or even helping to rearrange furniture. When we lift incorrectly, we put excessive stress on our muscles, ligaments, and especially our backs. Here are some of the specific dangers.

Back Injuries: This is probably the biggest concern. Our backs are complex structures, and improper lifting can lead to painful muscle strains, sprains in the ligaments, and even more serious disc injuries. Imagine bending over at your waist to pick up a heavy box – that puts a huge amount of pressure on your lower back. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, back injuries are a leading cause of lost workdays and cost billions of dollars annually. While those statistics cover all industries, the principle remains the same: improper lifting equals a higher risk of back trouble for us, too.

Muscle Strains and Sprains: It’s not just our backs that are at risk. Lifting awkwardly or with too much weight can strain muscles in our arms, legs, shoulders, and neck. These strains can range from a mild ache to a sharp pain that limits movement and can take days or even weeks to heal. Think about trying to lift something heavy with your arms fully extended – you’re putting a lot of stress on those smaller muscle groups.

Repetitive Strain Injuries: Even smaller, seemingly insignificant lifts done repeatedly throughout the day can add up and cause problems. Over time, these repetitive motions can lead to what are known as repetitive strain injuries, affecting tendons, nerves, and muscles. This can manifest as pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness, and can become a chronic issue if not addressed. Consider how many times you might bend and lift papers or supplies in a day – doing it incorrectly each time increases this risk.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

So, what can we do to prevent these kinds of incidents? The best way to protect ourselves from lifting-related strains is to be mindful and use correct techniques. Here are some specific things we can all do.

Use the Right Technique: The Foundation of Safe Lifting Always bend your knees and keep your back straight when lifting. Imagine you're sitting down to pick up the object. This engages your strong leg muscles to do the work, protecting your back. For example, when lifting a box of books from the floor, squat down – keeping your back straight – grip the box firmly and then stand up using your leg muscles. Avoid bending over at your waist, which puts excessive strain on your lower back.

Assess the Load: Know Your Limits and When to Ask for Help Before you lift anything, take a moment to assess its weight and size. If an item feels too heavy or awkward for you to handle comfortably and safely on your own, don't hesitate to ask for assistance. Team lifting is a great way to prevent injuries. For instance, if you need to move a heavy piece of equipment, get a colleague to help you lift and carry it.

Plan Your Movement: Ensure a Clear and Safe Path Before you lift, make sure your walking path is clear of any obstacles like loose papers, bags, or spills. This prevents tripping or stumbling while you're carrying the load. For example, if you're moving supplies from one classroom to another, take a quick look at the hallway to ensure nothing is in your way.

Keep the Load Close: Maximize Stability and Control Hold the object as close to your body as possible. This reduces the leverage and strain on your back. Think of carrying a stack of papers close to your chest rather than with outstretched arms. The closer the weight is to your center of gravity, the more stable and less stressful the lift will be.

Avoid Twisting: Pivot Your Feet Instead Never twist your body while lifting or carrying an object. If you need to change direction, pivot your feet instead. Twisting while under load can put significant and damaging stress on your spine. For example, if you pick up a box and need to turn to the right, move your feet in that direction rather than twisting your torso.

Use Equipment When Available: Make Smart Choices Utilize equipment like dollies, hand trucks, or carts whenever possible for moving heavy or multiple items. This significantly reduces the physical strain on your body. For example, instead of carrying a stack of chairs, use a rolling cart to transport them.

Listen to Your Body: Recognize and Respect Pain Signals Pay attention to how your body feels. If you experience any pain or discomfort while lifting, stop

immediately. Don’t try to push through it, as this can lead to more serious injuries. Report any pain to your supervisor or the school nurse.

FINAL WORD

Thinking about how we lift might seem like a small thing, but it really adds up to keeping us all feeling good and healthy. Let’s make these safe habits part of how we do things every day so we can all keep doing our best work without unnecessary aches and pains.