



THE “THINK BEFORE YOU LIFT” APPROACH

Many back injuries do not happen because a load is extremely heavy. They happen because workers lift without planning. Lifting in awkward positions, twisting while carrying, rushing, or underestimating the weight are common causes of strain injuries. The “Think Before You Lift” approach is a simple pause before any manual handling task to reduce the risk of injury.

Why Planning Matters

Back and muscle injuries often develop suddenly and can lead to long-term pain or time off work. Once injured, recovery can take weeks or even months.

Common causes of lifting injuries include:

- Lifting loads that are too heavy.
- Twisting while lifting.
- Bending at the waist instead of the knees.
- Carrying loads that block vision.
- Lifting in confined spaces.
- Repetitive lifting without rest.
- Rushing to complete the task.

Most of these injuries are preventable with proper planning.

The “Think Before You Lift” Checklist

Before lifting, pause and ask:

- How heavy is the load?
- Is the weight evenly distributed?
- Can I lift this safely on my own?
- Is there a safer way to move it?
- Is my path clear?
- Am I wearing appropriate footwear?
- Do I need help or mechanical assistance?

If something does not feel right, stop and reassess.

Safe Lifting Basics

When lifting manually:

- Stand close to the load.
- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Bend your knees, not your back.
- Keep your back straight.
- Grip the load firmly.
- Lift smoothly — avoid jerking movements.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Avoid twisting — turn your whole body.
- Set the load down carefully.

If the load is too heavy, use a trolley, mechanical aid, or ask for assistance.

When to Stop

Do not attempt to lift if:

- You feel strain before lifting.
- The load shifts unexpectedly.
- The object is unstable.
- The space is too tight to move safely.
- You are already fatigued.

Stopping early prevents injury.

Summary

Manual handling injuries are common but preventable. The “Think Before You Lift” approach encourages a short pause to assess the task before acting. Planning the lift, using correct technique, and asking for help when needed protects your back and long-term health. A few seconds of thinking can prevent months of pain.

Discussion Points

1. What lifting tasks on this site carry the highest risk?
2. When should mechanical aids be used?
3. What signs indicate a load is too heavy to lift alone?

