

GUARDING AGAINST LIFE LONG EFFECTS OF POOR BODY MECHANICS

Definition: Body mechanics are the way you move your body and your back during everyday kinds of tasks. Poor body mechanics often lead to periods of severe back pain and strain. While use of proper body mechanics can prevent injury from occurring.

This handout contains principles of good body mechanics. These general principles should be considered when performing your daily activities.

General Principles

- Maintain the normal curves of your spine at all times.
- Avoid bending, twisting, and over-reaching.
- Lift and carry objects close to your body.
- Before beginning any task, think about how to perform the activity in a way that will protect your back.

Lifting

- Position yourself closely to the object and stand with your feet shoulder distance apart.
- Bend your knees to get to floor-do not bend at waist. Place one knee on the floor for more stability if you need it.
- Test the weight of the object before lifting. If it is too heavy, get help.
- Use 2 hands when lifting and keep object close to the body.
- Lift by straightening your knees – let your legs do the work instead of your back. Keep abdominal muscles firm.
- Do not twist. Your back should be straight.

Reaching

- Reach only as far as it is comfortable. Do not stretch.
- Use a sturdy step stool for out of reach objects.
- Test the weight of the object before lifting it off shelf by pushing up on one corner.
- Only light, rarely used items should be stored overhead.
- If reaching across a counter or table, place one hand on the table and reach for item with your other hand. Slide the object close to you and then lift.

Pushing/Pulling

- Push rather than pull when you have a choice. It is less strain.
- Stay close to the object.
- For pushing, place one leg behind the other, bend knees and hips, and incline body toward the object.
- When pulling, place one foot behind the other. Only pull for short distances.

Carrying

- Hold objects with 2 hands at waist level if possible.
- Keep object close to your body.
- If carrying an item with one hand, such as a suitcase, occasionally switch it from one hand to the other.

Final Points to Remember

- Do not hesitate to ask for help when you need it.
- Roll or slide objects if you can avoid lifting.
- Keep the loads small. Do not try to lift and carry many objects at once.
- If you feel back strain during an activity, examine how you are performing the task and adjust using the above guidelines.

