



## Back Safety Tips

### HOW TO HURT YOUR BACK WHILE LIFTING SOMETHING

- » **Lock and load:** Your spine is made up of irregularly ring-shaped bones called vertebrae, stacked on top of each other with shock-absorbing pads of cartilage in between. Attached to each vertebra are muscles and ligaments that support the structure and keep it aligned. Human spines are made to support us when we're standing up straight, not bent over. You can hurt your back simply by locking your knees and bending forward at the waist for any length of time. You're even more likely to overstress your back by lifting something—even a light object—in that position.
- » **Twist and shout:** Your spine allows you to twist from side to side, but if you twist your torso as you lift something, you're putting all the stress onto the muscles and ligaments of one side of your body, without the other side to help them.

### HOW NOT TO HURT YOUR BACK WHILE LIFTING SOMETHING

**Lift with your legs—not your back:** Before you grasp the object you're going to lift, get down into position by bending at your knees first, rather than at your waist. As you lift, hug the object as close to your body as you can and keep your back as vertical as you can. That way, the big muscles in your upper legs do most of the work, rather than your back muscles.

**NEVER twist your torso while you lift:** If you need to turn while you're lifting something, move one foot at a time in the direction you need to go. Turn your whole body with your legs, rather than turning just your upper body with your back.

**Don't be a hero:** Be honest with yourself about whether you think you can safely lift an object alone. If you have any doubt at all, **ask for help**.

## STRESS-FREE SHOVELING

The same principles that apply to safe lifting will help you avoid back injuries while shoveling.



Keep your feet apart, planted firmly on the ground, and bend your knees slightly.



Firm your abdominal muscles before you lift the shovel, and use your legs to help lift the load.

Hold the load close to your body, and move it by turning with your feet instead of twisting your torso.



When you dispose of the load, as with the rest of the shoveling motions, keep your back straight, and remain as vertical as possible. If you lean forward at the waist, you're making your back muscles lift not only the shovel load, but the entire weight of your upper body.

For more information about American Family's Loss Control Services, visit [www.amfam.com](http://www.amfam.com)

### DISCLAIMER

The recommendations printed here follow generally accepted safety standards. Compliance with these recommendations does not guarantee that you will be in conformance with any building code, or federal, state or local regulations regarding safety or fire. Compliance does not ensure the absolute safety of you, your operations or place of business.