

How much can I lift?

OHS information for workers and employers

KEY POINTS

- There are no exact rules about the maximum weight a worker can lift
- A variety of variables should be considered when lifting including age, health, strength and the size and shape of the object
- Employers must complete hazard assessments and remove or reduce risk of injury when manual lifting is needed

Variables such as age, health, strength and the size and shape of the object mean it's not possible to give an exact weight. A better guide is for employers to do mandatory hazard assessments and remove or reduce risk of injury when manual lifting is needed.

THE HAZARDS: What are the hazards of manual lifting?

Manual lifting (handling) includes lifting and handling of loads, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, holding, dragging and supporting objects.

Two types of hazards are posed: overexertion and overuse. Overexertion injuries result from too much loading or stretching muscles, tendons and ligaments that exceeds their strength and/or their range of motion. Overuse injuries result from using muscles, tendons or ligaments so much that the body is unable to repair the damage.

THE EFFECTS: What health effects could workers experience from manual lifting?

Overexertion and overuse can cause musculoskeletal injuries such as sprains and strains. These are injuries of the bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and other soft tissues. Musculoskeletal injuries are a leading cause of compensable lost-time (Workers' Compensation Board - WCB) claims in Alberta.

How Much Can I Lift?

It's difficult to develop specific lifting requirements based only on weight because other workplace and personal factors can contribute to injury, including:

- Distance between the object being lifted and the front of your body
- Number of lifts, and duration manual lifting is being performed
- Size, shape and texture of the object being lifted
- Distance the object is carried
- Height to and from which the object is lifted (starting and finishing heights)
- Position of hands and grip points on object
- Extent to which the body is twisted or in an awkward posture
- Age, health, skill, stamina and level of fitness

THE CONTROLS: How can workers be protected?

What employers can do to prevent injury

- Reduce or eliminate heavy and repetitive lifting
- Reduce the weight and size of the object to be lifted
- Replace lifting and lowering with pushing and pulling
- Provide lifting equipment such as carts, dollies, jib cranes, scissor lifts, etc.
- Reduce the distance that objects must be carried
- Provide workers with adequate clearance and headroom in their work areas
- Rotate workers among tasks which do not include lifting
- Suit lifting tasks to the worker's capabilities
- Keep track of symptoms and injuries
- Have an ergonomic assessment done of the job and work area

What workers can do to prevent injury

- Try to reduce the weight and size of the object you are lifting
- Keep objects you lift as close to your body as possible
- Try to lift from waist level
- Avoid above shoulder level lifting when possible
- Avoid rotating or twisting movements and awkward postures when lifting or lowering a load
- Make sure feet are positioned comfortably and are on stable ground
- Lift loads smoothly
- Pace your work
- Report any symptoms you may experience to a supervisor as early as possible

How Much Can I Lift?

Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & Surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

Website

work.alberta.ca/ohs-contact-us

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