

HEALTHY BACKS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SAFE LIFTING & BACK CARE IN AGED CARE

I. ANATOMY

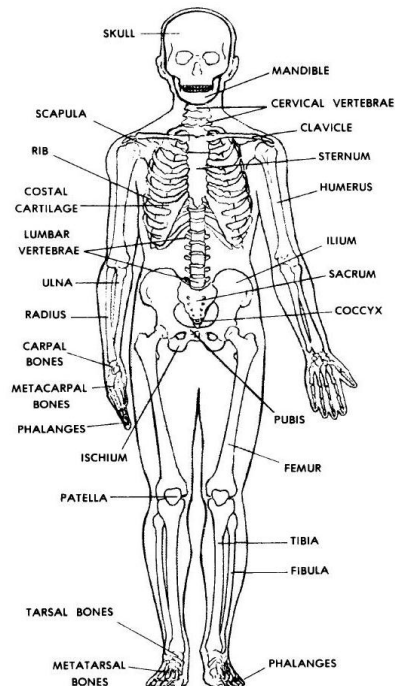
The spinal column acts as a major support frame for the whole body keeping us upright and protecting our vital organs via the rib cage. The spine is grouped into 4 main sections:

1. The **Cervical** spine: the neck, supports and moves the head & shoulders
2. The **Thoracic** spine. all the ribs attach to these 12 vertebrae
3. The **Lumbar** spine the lower back, supports the weight of the body
4. The **Sacrum** and **Coccyx**: an immovable section where the pelvis attaches

Seeing the functions of the spine it is easy to see the importance and need for great care with our backs. An injury to our back will affect our whole life. A healthy back will give us good movement, pain free activity and good support when we need it and it is something to be treasured!



Details of Human Spinal Column



Human Skeleton

II. THE LAW

Worksafe Australia has developed a National Standard for manual handling in the workplace in order to reduce the incidence of back injuries. FINES are a reality for unsafe work practices in Hospitals and Nursing Homes around Australia. Individuals can be fined up to **\$3,300**, managers **\$55,000** organizations can be penalised up to **\$560,000**.

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III. LIFTING PEOPLE

People are difficult to lift and transfer. The reasons are because:

1. they don't have **handles**
2. they have a free and strong **will** and can be **unpredictable**
3. they can have many reasons for **not helping**
4. It may take more than one person to help
5. they are **heavy** objects!
6. they may have **medical conditions** which make moving difficult

IV. SAFE LIFTING RULES

DO	DON'T
1. Bend hips and knees	Bend your back
2. Move your feet	Twist your back
3. Lift small loads or get help	Lift too much
4. Do a few shorter lifts	Lift too far
5. Keep the load close to you	Lift over or across things
6. Take your time, PLAN	Lift too fast
7. Use aids & equipment	Think: <i>I'll be OK</i>

V. SAFE LIFTING LIMIT

Safe Lifting Limit in the workplace = 16kg/person

*NOTE: This is only a general recommendation **not a law**, you can sustain a back injury lifting a feather!*

VII. THE "NO TOUCH LIFTING POLICY"

We have a "**No Touch Lifting Policy**" in place which means:

- a. You should never grab or touch the resident during a lift or reposition
- b. You should never lift a resident at any time
- c. You should use Aids and Equipment in the form of Hoists, Pelican Bens, Sliding Sheets and Draw Sheets (among others) to lift and reposition a resident,

It does **not** mean.

- a. That you should never touch a resident, it is only when lifting and transferring are they not to be touched
- b. That you can still manually lift a person as long as you don't "touch" them

VIII. NO-NO'S

1. Lifting a Non-Weightbearing Resident: All non-weightbearing residents must be mechanically lifted for transfers and use of aids is needed for repositioning. 2 assistants are necessary when using the Hoist or Standing Lifters

2. Lifting a client Who has fallen: They are much better off where they are. A person should be assessed while on the ground and then mechanically lifted. If this is impossible use 4 to lift and plan very carefully.

3. The Underarm Hook. The Under-Arm hook lift has been proven to be a very dangerous lift for both staff and residents. Far too much weight is placed under the armpit where the delicate nerves and blood vessels lie.

IX. COMMON GRIPES

1.but we just don't have time: Do you have time to be flat on your back for a few months?

2. ...I just don't know how to use this thing: It is your duties as working staff to know how to effectively use all the help that is given to you. If you have trouble ASK and then

PRACTISE ! PRACTICE ! PRACTISE !

X. THE 3 STAGE APPROACH

The Work Cover Authority of NSW has introduced a three stage approach to manual handling. This is designed to cover every aspect of manual handling and is based on the RISK factors involved.

This gives power to the worker to be able to speak up, suggest, notify and bring about change in your workplace regarding risks and safety.

1. RISK identification: identifying a task that may be a risk. All jobs can be broken down into tasks.

2. RISK Assessment: After a task is identified as a risk we need to assess it and find the specific risk factors

3. RISK Control. Controls are the steps taken when considering all aspects of the risk factors and attempt to eliminate or overcome the problem areas

XI. RESPONSIBILITY OF...

Employees

- where they have received appropriate training in manual handling techniques, **USE THESE TECHNIQUES** where possible.
- where they have received appropriate training in the use of mechanical aids equipment **USE THE TRAINING** where possible.
- report and document all risk situations, any actual handling situation which may have caused injury and any pain that is possibly related to the workplace and manual handling techniques.

SAFE LIFTING AND MANUAL HANDLING IS A WAY OF LIFE!