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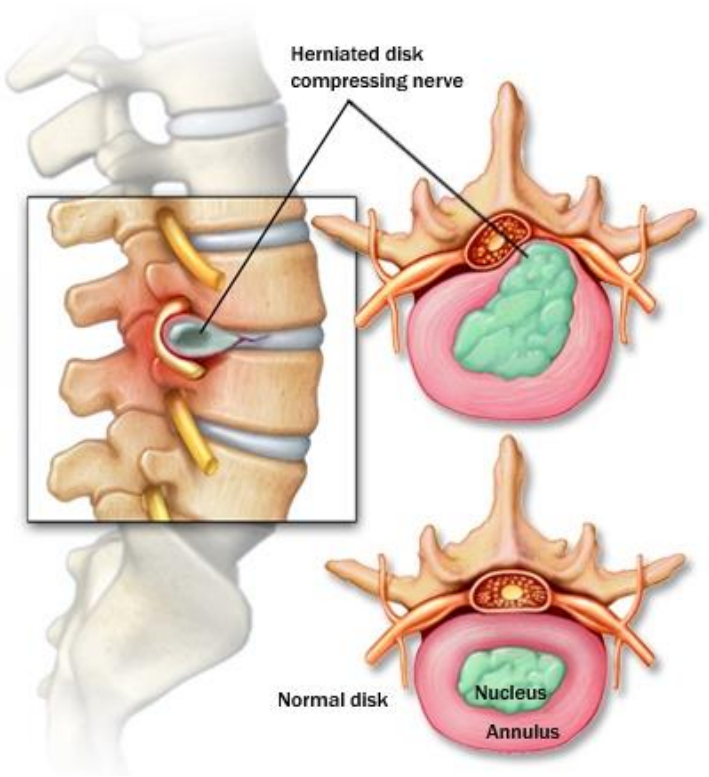
# Lifting

## How Can Lifting Injure Your Back?

Stresses placed on the back during lifting can cause damage to structures within the back.

- Discs are made of strong fibrous rings that surround a jelly-like core**.** The discs provide a cushion between the vertebrae (bones).
- Lifting incorrectly, with the spine bent forwards, causes the fluid to be pushed backwards and pressure within the disc increases. If the pressure is great enough, the fibrous rings or the supporting ligaments and muscles may get inflamed, tear or rupture.
- Twisting or jarring while lifting or carrying can also injure the facet joints of the back.




Other factors which contribute to stress on your spine while lifting include:

- The weight of the load
- How far the load is away from your body
- How repetitive the lifting is
- The speed of the lift

Your physical condition will also have an effect:

- Weakness in the back and stomach muscles can reduce your ability to protect your back while lifting
- Reduced leg strength may limit the leg power needed for lifting which puts extra strain on the back.
- Poor fitness will cause your muscles to fatigue placing increased stress on your back

## How to Lift Correctly

- Plan the lift – remove obstacles, open gates and doors etc
- Know what you are lifting ie. Weight of the object
- If two people are required for the lift, coordinate with the other person
- Get a firm footing, making sure feet are shoulder width apart
- Ensure a good firm grip on the load
- Bend at the knees and hips and use the strong muscles of your legs to lift
- Maintain the lordosis of your lumbar spine ('stick' your butt out. Your back should be 'straight' but it does not have to be vertical).
- Brace your abdominal and back muscles
- Lift smoothly, avoiding jerking or twisting
- Keep the load close to your body
- Do not hold your breath
- Shift your feet to turn – **do not** twist your back
- Avoid fatigue (many injuries occur when the lifter is tired or unwell – particularly towards the end of the day

**Remember to maintain the lordosis and 'muscle brace' and use your leg muscles when lowering the object

## Consider

- Getting assistance from someone else to lift
- DO NOT attempt to lift more than you are capable of
- Try to position frequently lifted items at waist height, to avoid unnecessary bending
- Break down loads to smaller sizes and reduced weight
- Vary light tasks with heavier lifting
- Using a sack truck, hoist, crane or forklift if available

****It may take longer but it will save you from low back pain**

Apply the same general principles for pushing and pulling