



Safe Lifting and Handling Tips: Child Care Facilities

Many times, we don't think twice about lifting a child in our care. "Oh, he's not that heavy" is a common refrain. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducts research on how much weight a worker can safely lift on a daily basis. All factors being ideal, in an industrial setting (i.e., lifting a box), the maximum safe weight limit is 50 pounds. When lifting a person (versus a box or container) that maximum safe weight drops to 35 pounds.

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Safely Lifting Students

In general, you want to avoid lifting anything directly from the floor. If the child has fallen or is seated or lying on the floor and needs to be lifted, a full-body lift should be used. If you do need to lift a student from the floor and there is no equipment available to assist with the lift, get help.

Dos and Don'ts for Reducing Back and Upper Extremity Injuries

DO

- Look for ways to minimize lifting of children for common things such as diaper changing, drinks and comforting.
- Consider using approved change tables that have steps on the side where the child can climb up to the table.
- Step stools near drinking fountains offer children more independence and reduce strain on the back and arms.
- To comfort a child, kneel down on a mat or hold them while they sit on a change table or other raised surface, rather than lifting them up.
- If you do need to lift them up, place your feet and knees at least shoulder width apart or front to back in a wide-step position. This will allow you to bend at the hips, while keeping your back in its normal "S" curve.
- Face the child directly with feet pointed at the child rather than twisting the back.
- Squat while keeping your chin up. This will maintain your back and neck in a relaxed, neutral position.
- Keep one or both arms free if possible. When you squat down or push back up, use your hand or elbow as support on your thigh or any available structure. This takes some of the compression and strain off your lower back.

DON'T

- Don't lift unless you have to; look at other options first.
- Don't lift with your feet close together. This results in poor leverage, instability and a tendency to round your back.
- Don't lift with your knees and hips straight.
- Don't squat so far that your knees are parallel to the floor. It is very difficult for anyone to get up from this position.
- Don't tense or twist your neck or back when lifting.
- Don't lift children that are too heavy for you.

Holding Children

- When holding toddlers, avoid placing them on one hip.
- When holding or rocking children, use chairs or furniture with upper back support, keeping children centered on your body and using both arms to hold.
- It is also helpful to teach the children to help you lift by holding onto your body rather than leaning away from you.
- Avoid bending down at the waist to interact with children. Instead, use a squatting or kneeling position.
- If possible when sitting on the floor, sit against a wall or furniture to support your back.

