

Lifting and carrying (manual handling)

The manual handling or lifting of objects is the cause of more injuries on worksites than any other factor. Back strains and associated injuries are the main cause of lost hours in the services sector. Within the context of the domestic plumbing industry, manual handling can involve pushing, pulling, lifting, and lowering, of loads.

The movement of large or heavy loads requires careful planning to identify potential hazards before they cause injury. This means working to a basic risk assessment.

1. Risk Assessments

Does **The Task** involve:

- Stooping
- Twisting
- Excessive lifting or lowering distances
- Excessive carrying distances
- Excessive pushing or pulling distances
- Frequent or prolonged physical effort
- The sudden risk of the load moving

Is **The Load**:

- Heavy
- Bulky or unwieldy
- Difficult to grasp
- Unstable, are the contents likely to shift
- Sharp, hot or otherwise potentially damaging

Does **The Working Environment** have:

- Space constraints
- Slippery or unstable floors
- Variation in levels
- Poor lighting
- Hot/cold/humid conditions

Does **The Individual**:

- Have a reach problem, which restricts their physical capability
- Have knowledge and training for manual handling

2. Lifting Rules

- Ensure that the path where you need to move the load to, is clear from obstructions, that any doors you have to pass through are opened and that you've a clear area for placing the load
- Test the load by gently applying force with your foot, this will tell you if the load feels heavy and difficult. If this is the case, you may need to seek help for a double lift
- If it feels comfortable to move, start from a good base and stand with the feet hip width apart
- Maintain the back straight and upright; bend the knees and let the strong muscles of the legs and thighs do the work
- Keep the arms straight and close to the body
- Balance the load using both hands if possible
- Avoid sudden movements and twisting of the spine
- Consider the position of the centre of gravity of (of the load) the load when lifting
- Use gloves to avoid injuries from sharp or rough edges
- The person carrying the load must always be able to see over or around it and all obstacles should be removed from the vicinity



3. Team Lifting

- Team members ideally should be of similar height and build.
- All must know the lifting sequence.
- One member must be the nominated co-ordinator.
- Good communication should reduce accident risk.

