

# Backs! 2005 initiative

Including workplace inspections



Warehouse - poor storage of heavy components on high shelves



Production - unsafe repetitive bending, twisting and stretching

## Back pain and injury at work

Manual handling is a major cause of back injury. One in five of those who suffer work-related ill health has back pain - bad both for people and for business. High-risk activity, such as heavy, frequent, or awkward lifting and handling can often be avoided, eg by using mechanical aids.

## Consider typical tasks

- Can manual handling be avoided?
- Can the tasks be mechanised, or a lifting or handling aid used?
- Can they be altered to reduce the risk from twisting and stretching?
- Can the work be done at waist height?

## What inspectors expect to find

- Safe handling methods based on assessment of risk
- Manual handling avoided or sensible control of risk, eg by mechanisation/handling aids
- Workers trained how to use available lifting aids, and in safe handling techniques

## Top tips

- Assess the risk - the MAC tool can help identify high-risk operations
- Prioritise - sort out higher-risk operations first
- Keep it simple - choose sensible solutions
- Involve workers - to assess risk and choose the right handling aids
- Train workers - to operate and maintain lifting aids safely
- Check solutions for new risks, eg excessive pushing/pulling, vehicle movements

## Want to know more?

Free guidance is available from the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and from HSE Infoline on 0845 345 0055:

- *MAC tool - Manual handling assessment chart* INDG383
- *Getting to grips with manual handling - a short guide* INDG143
- *Are you making the best use of lifting and handling aids?* INDG398
- *Managing sickness absence and return to work in small businesses* INDG399

This note has been prepared by Health and Safety Executive to assist duty holders during the Backs! 2005 musculoskeletal disorder initiative. If you wish to discuss the contents please contact HSE Infoline on 0845 345 0055, or by fax 0845 408 9566, or by e-mail: [hseinformationservices@natbrit.com](mailto:hseinformationservices@natbrit.com)  
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