Back injuries are one of the most common types of occupational injuries according to the National Safety Council. It states that, “Once a back injury occurs, you are three to five times more likely to experience subsequent injuries. It’s important to know how to protect your back when lifting.”

By adequately preparing for the lift and employing proper lift techniques, back injuries will be greatly reduced or eliminated.

Prepare For Lifting
1. Adequately warm up or stretch prior to attempting to lift heavy objects.
2. Wear gloves if needed for gripping the object or to prevent scrapes and cuts.
3. Wear shoes appropriate for the task being performed.

Size Up the Load and Work Area
1. Assess the load before you lift.
   a. If the load is heavy or clumsy, get a mechanical aid (i.e. dolly / push cart) or help from a coworker.
   b. If the weight of the object is unknown, tap it gently to determine if it can be safely lifted.
   c. Divide large loads into smaller ones.
   d. Check for rough edges or abnormalities that could affect your grip.
2. Make sure that you have a safe path to carry the load.
   a. Aisles should be kept clear.
   b. Avoid wet or slippery areas.
   c. Make sure you have a clear place to set down the object.

Lift Safely
1. Keep your feet apart, staggered if possible.
2. Get a good grip on the load and keep your elbows tucked in.
3. Keep the object as close to you as possible.
4. Place your feet close to the object and center yourself over the load.
5. Keep your back straight during the lift.
6. Lift by straightening your legs; raise up with your head first.
7. Do not bend at the waist or twist. If you must turn, turn with your feet, not your body.
8. Set the load down properly using the same principles.