# Back Safety

## Lifting Principles
- Maintain a neutral spine, keep your **back straight**!
- Hold your abdominal muscles tight, but **don’t** hold your breath!
- Use your **legs** to lift, not your back
- **Don’t bend** over to lift
- **No twisting**—move your feet instead
- Maintain the load as **close to your body** as possible

## Lifting Assistance
- Seek **assistance** when lifting:
  - Any loads >**50 pounds** (or any heavy load you do not feel confident lifting)
  - Any **large or bulky** loads
  - Any loads that are **oddly shaped** and difficult to handle
- **Verbal Communication** is important
  - Designate a **lift leader** to ensure you:
    - Lift at the same time
    - Walk in step
    - Lower the load together
    - Scan the environment for potential hazards first
- Whenever possible, use **mechanical assistance** (fork lift, hand truck, dolly) which will reduce the strain on your back over time.

## Push/Pull Principles
- Maintain a neutral spine, keep your **back straight**!
- Hold your abdominal muscles tight, but **don’t** hold your breath!
- Use your **legs** to push or pull, not your back
- **Don’t bend** over when pushing or pulling
- **No twisting**—move you feet instead
- Maintain the load as **close to your body** as possible
- **Remember**: It is always safer and easier to push rather than pull

## Carrying Principles
- Maintain a neutral spine, keep your **back straight**!
- Hold your abdominal muscles tight, but **don’t** hold your breath!
- **Balance** the carried load right to left to prevent excessive strain on your spine.
- Whenever possible, **utilize a cart** to transport tools and equipment rather than lifting and carrying.