

Handy hints to avoid lifting and straining

Physiotherapy advice

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Your doctor has recommended you avoid lifting for medical reasons. This can be difficult if you have small children to look after, but it is possible.

The key to managing your lifting restrictions is to plan ahead. You need to re-think all of the types of lifting you do, even those that seem normal or routine.

You will need help

- Ask your family and friends for help. Explain that this is only for a short time until you are allowed to lift again.
- Set up routines with support people. Clearly state what help you need and when e.g. help vacuuming the house every Tuesday morning, ask your partner to bath the children, etc.
- Consider hiring help for housework and to look after your children to lessen your physical effort.

Around the home

- Make sure work and kitchen surfaces are at waist height to avoid bending forward. Use a chopping board to increase the height.
- Store frequently used or heavier objects in easily accessible places – preferably at waist height.
- Use a pick up stick (available from the chemist) for collecting objects off the floor.
- Do your household jobs in small bursts. Swap around between tasks.
- Use long-handled brushes and mops to avoid straining your back.
- Do not vacuum.
- Break down the load you are lifting into smaller, lighter bundles.
- Use a trolley to transport washing rather than lifting a washing basket.
- If you do have to lift a light load, always hold the object close to your body, keep your back straight and bend your knees to lift. Bend your knees not your back.

Shopping

- Set up an online grocery account and have your shopping delivered to your door.
- Use a lightweight shopping trolley rather than shopping bags to carry goods.
- Break down the load you are lifting into smaller, lighter bundles.
- Plan the amount of walking that you will need to do. Plan to rest every 20 minutes.
- Walk slowly and carefully, maintaining good posture.

Managing a newborn baby

- Leave the baby capsule in the car.
- Lift your baby out and use a sling or pram instead of the capsule. When lifting, step one foot in front of the other and avoid twisting when you lift.

If you have small children

- Children need plenty of encouragement as they can become frustrated that you are no longer able to lift them. Turn daily activities into a game where possible. Patience is the key!
- Use a reward system, e.g. use star charts to reinforce positive behaviours and add some fun.
- Limit the number of 'jobs' that you need to do each day. Managing children when you have lifting restrictions is more time consuming so you will need to plan for that.
- Plan activities that need lifting around the times when you have some support from a family member or friend. Ask older children to help if appropriate.
- If your child is old enough, spend time explaining that "Mummy can't lift for a while and you need to be a big boy/girl and show me how you can do it".
- Try using engaging phrases such as: "I bet that you can't do... Can you really? Oh, yes you can!"

- Use a (walk in) shower if possible to avoid lifting over the bath. Have a shower together so that you don't have to lean forward to wash your child.
- Place a small non slip stool on both the inside and outside of the bath. Stay close to your child while they climb up and over the side of the bath using the stools.
- Consider if your child really does need a bath today. Could you just use a face washer to clean the grubby areas?
- Use a highchair that can be lowered. This way your child can climb up and into it on their own. Stay close for safety.
- Use a stool to allow your child to climb up onto the change table and cot where possible. Stay close for safety.
- If your child is old enough, consider moving them into a single bed rather than using the cot.
- Teach your child how to climb in and out of the car seat safely. Allow plenty of time when planning trips to avoid the temptation of lifting them in yourself.
- If your child refuses to climb into/out of the car, consider asking someone nearby to help you. Your child will usually decide that they will do it themselves anyway.
- Buy/loan a lightweight pram for lifting in/out of the car. Ensure the pram is easy to fold/unfold.

Toileting

Do not strain when you empty your bladder and bowel.

The best position to sit on the toilet is:

- sit leaning forward with your feet flat. Use a stool if your feet do not touch the ground
- legs wide apart with your elbows on your thighs
- let your tummy bulge out and relax
- always sit on the toilet seat. Do not hover above it
- stay relaxed on the toilet; relax your breathing
- allow yourself time, do not rush.



If you need any further advice or have questions please contact the Physiotherapy Department on (03) 8345 3160.