

HOW TO LIFT YOUR LUGGAGE



In the flurry of packing for a vacation or business trip, it's easy to get carried away and pack everything but the kitchen sink into your suitcase and carry-on. But over-packed luggage and improper lifting and carrying techniques are common causes of injury to the back, neck and shoulders.

The good news is many of these injuries can be easily prevented. The following tips can help take the pain out of your vacation:

Choosing your luggage:

- When shopping for new luggage, look for a sturdy, light, high-quality and transportable piece. Avoid purchasing luggage that is too heavy or bulky when empty.
- Choosing a bag with wheels and a handle can go a long way to lighten your load.
- A good quality backpack with adjustable, padded shoulder straps and a waist strap makes an ideal carry-on because, when worn properly, backpacks can evenly distribute weight.

Packing your luggage:

- Over-packing is an easy pitfall, but consider that the larger and heavier the luggage, the more susceptible a traveller is to neck, back and shoulder injuries. Try to only pack what you absolutely need.
- When possible, place items in a few smaller bags, instead of one large luggage piece.
- Ensure your carry-on luggage does not weigh more than 10 to 15 per cent of your body weight.
- Keep the contents of any carry-on luggage to a minimum, pack heavy items at the bottom of the bag and make efficient use of the bag's pockets.

Lifting and carrying your luggage:

Lifting your luggage can't always be avoided, even if your luggage has wheels. But practising safe lifting techniques can substantially reduce your risk of injury.

- Move slowly and, whenever possible, break the action into smaller parts. For instance, when loading a suitcase in the trunk of a car, try lifting it first onto a chair or step-stool, then lifting it into the trunk. Similarly, when placing luggage in an overhead compartment, first lift it onto the top of the seat.
- When lifting your luggage, first get close to the load and stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Bend at the knees and let your leg muscles, rather than your back, do the lifting.
- Hold the load close to your body.
- Avoid twisting. Instead, turn your feet in the direction you are headed and turn your entire body in that direction.
- Do not carry bulky luggage for long periods of time. Make sure to check heavier items when travelling rather than carrying them for the duration of the trip.
- Try to carry light pieces in each hand rather than a single heavy item on one side.
- If using a backpack, use both shoulder straps and the waist strap, and adjust them to minimize the bag's movement.
- If using a duffel or shoulder bag, switch sides often to reduce strain.

