

Luggage-lifting tips for safe travels

December 21 2013



Pack like a pro to help avoid injury.

(HealthDay)—Carrying and lifting heavy luggage during the holidays can lead to neck, wrist, back and shoulder pain and injuries unless you take proper safety precautions, an orthopedic surgeon says.

In 2012, nearly 54,000 [luggage](#)-related injuries occurred in the United States, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

"Holiday travel can be uniquely stressful and physically taxing, especially when transporting heavy and cumbersome luggage," said Dr. Warner Pinchback, a spokesman for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

"To ensure that you arrive at your holiday destination free from pain, it's important to know how to optimally choose, pack, carry and lift your

luggage," he added in an academy news release.

The academy offers the following luggage safety tips:

- When buying new luggage, select a sturdy, lightweight piece with wheels and a handle.
- Don't overpack. Try to carry items in a few smaller bags instead of one large suitcase. Keep in mind that many airlines restrict the size and weight of carry-on luggage.
- Bend your knees when lifting. The safe way to hoist a heavy item such as luggage is to stand alongside of it, bend at the knees—not the waist—and use your leg muscles as you grab the handle and straighten up. Be sure to hold the bag close to your body when lifting.
- Take care when storing luggage in overhead compartments. The first step is to lift the piece to the top of the seat. Then, with one hand on each side of the piece, lift the suitcase up. Place the wheel-side in the compartment first, then push the bag to the back of the compartment.
- Keep your back straight. When lifting and carrying luggage, point your toes in the direction you are headed, and then turn your entire body in that direction. Don't twist your back.
- Take it slow. Don't try to rush when lifting or carrying a suitcase. It's a good idea to ask for help if you are having trouble with a bag that is too heavy or an awkward shape.
- Check your bags. Don't attempt to carry heavy luggage for long periods of time or for long distances, such as through a large airport terminal.
- Carry your luggage when climbing stairs, don't drag it behind you.
- Even backpacks can be too heavy. Make sure if you wear a backpack that both shoulder straps are padded and adjusted properly. Use all the compartments to help distribute the weight

of your items evenly. Don't sling the bag over one shoulder because this can cause muscle strain.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers [holiday health and safety tips](#).

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Citation: Luggage-lifting tips for safe travels (2013, December 21) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-luggage-lifting-safe.html>

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