

Study finds lifting advice doesn't stand up for everyone

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Commonly accepted advice to keep a straight back and squat while lifting in order to avoid back pain has been challenged by new Curtin University research.

The research examined people who had regularly performed manual lifting through their occupation for more than five years and found those who experienced [low back pain](#) as a result were more likely to use the recommended technique of squatting and keeping a straight back, while those without [back pain](#) tended not to adhere to the recommended lifting advice.

Lead researcher Ph.D. candidate Nic Saraceni from the Curtin School of Allied Health said the study required participants to each perform 100 lifts using two differently weighted boxes, with researchers observing and measuring their action.

"We found those with low back pain were more likely to lift with a slower, less flexed low back and a more squat-like technique," Mr Saraceni said.

"While both groups lifted using a more comparable technique at the end of the 100 lifts, the low back pain group still demonstrated a tendency to perform a slower and more squat-like lift throughout the task.

"These findings are the opposite of what is expected to occur according to existing advice on correct lifting techniques."

Research supervisor John Curtin Distinguished Professor Peter O'Sullivan, also from the Curtin School of Allied Health, said although the study did not reveal why people with low back pain lift with a more squat-like action, the findings were in line with previous research showing people with low back pain lift in a manner that society perceives to be correct or 'protective' of them.

"It is likely 'a one size fits all' approach to preventing and managing lifting-related low back pain does not exist, rather a more individualized approach may be required, which may be the subject of future research,"

Professor O'Sullivan said.

"Common assumptions that people who experience low back [pain](#) during lifting do so in a way that is 'incorrect' were not supported by our research and this raises questions about current [advice](#) regarding 'safe lifting.'"

The paper, "Exploring lumbar and lower limb kinematics and kinetics for evidence that lifting technique is associated with LBP," was published in journal *PLOS ONE*.

Provided by Curtin University

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