**Principles for safe moving and handling**

**Stop and think**

* Before moving a load or assisting a person to move think about what you are going to do
* Do not attempt to move more than you can safely handle, if in doubt seek advice
* Plan what you are going to do, prepare the environment, use appropriate handling equipment where possible and get help of you need it
* Consider breaking the activity into easy stages

**Keep close to the load**

* When moving a load or assisting a person to move keep as close as possible to reduce stress on the spine.
* Can you get closer to the load or person by adopting an oblique angle?

**Find a stable position**

* To ensure stability and ease of movement keep your knees relaxed and offset your feet
* Weight should be evenly distributed over both feet
* Be prepared to move your feet whilst moving and handling to maintain stability

**Avoid stooping and squatting**

* Stooping or adopting a posture where the weight of the upper body falls outside of the feet results in an increase in pressure on the spinal joints, discs and other structures
* Squatting increases the pressure on joints in the knees and feet.

**Use a secure hold**

* Muscles work more efficiently if the whole of the hands are used to hold loads rather than gripping with the fingers and thumbs.
* There is a greater surface area in contact with the person or load when gripping with the whole hand.
* Vary the hold as necessary to ensure comfort and stability.

**Avoid twisting**

* Twisting or leaning sideways, especially when handling, increases the risk of injury and places additional pressure on spinal joints and intervertebral discs, and reduces the effectiveness of muscles.
* Keep shoulders level and facing the same direction as the hips during handling activities
* Move feet to avoid twisting when turning to the side

**Lead with the head**

* Look ahead, not down
* When the handling action is initiated by an upward movement of the head the spine returns to its strongest upright position

**Move smoothly**

* Move loads smoothly and avoid jerky movements.

***Reference:***

*HME (Handling, Movement and Ergonomics), (2005), Moving and Handling Core Skills Handbook.*