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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Tips on staying injury-free from now till New Year's*  
**Give Back Strain a Holiday**

During the holiday season, healthcare providers see a significant rise in patients with back, shoulder and neck pain. Many individuals have desk or other sedentary jobs and are fairly inactive most of the year. Rushing around and carrying too many things at once places added stress on bodies, which may increase the chance of injury.

Simple steps can help you avoid muscle and joint discomfort. Here are some tips from the Pinellas County Health Department and the American Physical Therapy Association:

- **Weigh it first.** Test an object's weight before you lift it. First, try pushing it with your foot. If something is too heavy, try to break it down into smaller loads.
- **Get in position.** Keep your feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees when lifting.
- **Let legs lift.** Lift with your legs, not your back. Don't lean over an object to lift it. Stand close to the object, bend your legs and keep your back straight, then lift.
- **Maintain balance.** When you're shopping, maintain your balance by distributing the weight of shopping bags equally on both sides of your body.
- **Shop light.** Don't carry a heavy purse. Consider using a fanny pack or a small, properly fitted and positioned backpack.
- **Favor your feet.** Wear comfortable shoes when you shop, such as walking or running shoes. Many people suffer foot and ankle injuries from carrying packages while wearing high heels on hard surfaces.
- **Take a load off.** Don't carry overstuffed shopping bags for long periods of time. Make repeated trips to your car to unload your purchases. Consider using a shopping cart or get help to take packages to your car.

Give yourself a present this holiday season: Take precautions to prevent injuries when trying to lift and carry bulky presents, heavy luggage or other objects.

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*The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.*  
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