

*“Mavis, aged 70, was asked by the manager to collect a large number of heavy bags of donated goods left outside the shop and sort the items for storage, disposal or display. When sorting through the clothes she hurt her finger on a hypodermic needle that was mixed up with the clothes.”*

It's important to be aware of the hazards associated with sorting goods. Some volunteers may be more prone to injury than others – so it's worth asking if they are OK to lift heavy items, for example. There is also the possibility of tripping over bags. When sorting, there is the risk of injury from cuts or puncture wounds, which could become infected (including with life-threatening diseases such as hepatitis or HIV). You also need to remember that some clothing might be infested with fleas. When preparing the goods for display, take care to avoid burns and scalds from steam irons.

## Tips

- Rather than delegate the task to one individual, it may be better to share the moving and handling between several volunteers. Use a sack trolley to avoid carrying heavy bags.
- It's best to empty the bags onto a table so that the contents can be seen before handling. Working at table height also minimises the bending involved.
- It's a good idea to wear gloves when sorting, in case there are any sharp objects and to generally protect the skin from contamination or infestation.
- Make sure all electrical equipment is maintained and checked regularly.

## Useful links

Getting to grips with manual handling:

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf)

Association of Charity Shops health and safety advice:

[www.charityshops.org.uk/healthandsafety.html](http://www.charityshops.org.uk/healthandsafety.html)

[www.charityshops.org.uk/sm\\_pack/smworkbook2008.pdf](http://www.charityshops.org.uk/sm_pack/smworkbook2008.pdf)

Association of Charity Shops posters:

[www.charityshops.org.uk/sm\\_pack/lifting.pdf](http://www.charityshops.org.uk/sm_pack/lifting.pdf)

[www.charityshops.org.uk/sm\\_pack/sorting.pdf](http://www.charityshops.org.uk/sm_pack/sorting.pdf)

[www.charityshops.org.uk/sm\\_pack/safety.pdf](http://www.charityshops.org.uk/sm_pack/safety.pdf)