

## How to Prevent Back Pain

Four out of five adults will experience significant low back pain sometime during their life. Work-related back injuries are the nation's number one occupational hazard, but you could suffer back pain from activities at home and at play, too.

### Are you at risk?

You are most at risk for back pain if:

1. your job requires frequent bending and lifting
2. you must twist your body when lifting and carrying an object
3. you must lift and carry in a hurry
4. you are overweight
5. you do not exercise regularly or do not engage in recreational activities
6. you smoke

If you are a caregiver for an ill or injured family member, you are at greatest risk for back pain when:

1. pulling the person who is reclining in bed into a sitting position
2. transferring the person from the bed to a chair
3. leaning over the person for long periods of time

## Preventing Back Pain at Work and at Home

Wrong way to lift



Right way to lift



Plan ahead what you want to do and don't be in a hurry. Position yourself close to the object you want to lift. Separate your feet shoulder-width apart to give yourself a solid base of support. Bend at the knees. Tighten

your stomach muscles. Lift with your leg muscles as you stand up. Never lift an object by keeping your legs stiff, while bending over it.

Don't try to lift by yourself an object that is too heavy or an awkward shape. Get help.

To lift a very light object from the floor, such as a piece of paper, lean over the object, slightly bend one knee and extend the other leg behind you. Hold on to a nearby chair or table for support as you reach down to the object.



Whether you're lifting a heavy laundry basket or a heavy box in your garage, remember to get close to the object, bend at the knees and lift with your leg muscles. Do not bend at your waist. When lifting luggage, stand along side of the luggage, bend at your knees, grasp the handle and straighten up. While you are holding the object, keep your knees slightly bent to maintain your balance. If you have to move the object to one side, avoid twisting your body. Point your toes in the direction you want to move and pivot in that direction. Keep the object close to you when moving. When appropriate, use an assistive device such as a transfer belt, sliding board or draw sheet to move a person.

If you must place an object on a shelf, move as close as possible to the shelf. Spread your feet in a wide stance, positioning one foot in front of the other, to give you a solid base of support. Do not lean forward and do not fully extend your arms while holding the object in your hands.

If the shelf is chest high, move close to the shelf and place your feet apart and one foot forward. Lift the object chest high, keep your elbows at your side and position your hands so you can push the object up and on to the shelf. Remember to tighten your stomach muscles before lifting.



When sitting, keep your back in a normal, slightly arched position. Make sure your chair supports your lower back. Keep your head and shoulders erect. Make sure your working surface is at the proper height so you don't have to lean forward.

Once an hour, if possible, stand and stretch. Place your hands on your lower back and gently arch backward.

Physical exercise is good both for the body and mind. It helps your back pain too. Please only do the exercises that do not cause pain. If there is some exercise that causes pain please try to avoid that exercise in the beginning. It is possible that once you have had better control of your back pain you would be able to do that exercise later.

Walking is an excellent exercise. It is possible that even walking may cause back pain. It is best then to have frequent walks rather than take a long walk. It is possible that walking for 200 meters or 200 yards causes back pain. If so then only walk this distance at any single time. It is however possible to walk this 200 meters / 200 yards about 3 to 4 times a day. Once you are comfortable doing this then slowly increase the frequency and maybe the distance covered each time. It is however better to increase the frequency than the distance. If one walks 200 meters every waking hour of a day then one could easily walk 2 kilometres a day. This walking should be in excess of the walking that we do in our normal daily routine.

### Summary

1. Use the correct lifting and moving techniques.
2. Exercise regularly to keep the muscles that support your back strong and flexible.
3. Don't slouch; poor posture puts a strain on your lower back.
4. Maintain your proper body weight to avoid straining your back muscles.
5. Keep a positive attitude about your job and home life; studies show that persons who are unhappy at work or home tend to have more back problems and take longer to recover than persons who have a positive attitude.

Majority of the above information has been supplied by the American Academy of Orthopaedic surgeons and details are available on their web site at <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/main.cfm>

If you have any questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact.

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