

Helpful hints for low back pain

Whatever the cause of low back pain, part of its treatment is the correction of faulty posture. But “good posture” is not simply a matter of “standing tall”. It refers to the correct use of the body at all times. In fact, for joints and ligaments. Avoiding strain must become a way of life practiced while sitting, standing, walking, working and exercising.

Particular attention must be paid to the positions recommended for resting, since it is possible to strain the muscles of the back even while lying in bed. By learning to live with good posture, under all circumstance, you will gradually develop the proper posture and stronger muscles needed to support and protect your hard-working back.

SITTING ADVICE:

- When in acute pain, sit as little as possible, and then only for short periods of time.
- At all times provide support to the small of your back to maintain a normal curve. Never have a shallow in your back that is unsupported.
- Avoid sitting in swivel chairs on rollers as these chairs allow you to reach for objects by rotation your spine form a flexed position.
- Do not sit in soft or overstuffed chairs or sofas.
- Never sit in the same position for prolonged periods of time. Periodically change positions or get up and move around (about once an hour).
- When rising form sitting, slide to the front of the seat and stand while keeping your eyes and head upright. (avoid bending at the waist). Once standing if directed to do so, perform 2-5 standing back extensions.

DRIVING ADVICE:

- Bring the front seat of your car forward so your knees are level with your hips. Maintain and support the normal curve in the small of your back with a lumbar roll (a rolled up bath towel can be substituted). This will reduce the strain on your back and shoulder muscles.
- On long trips, stop every hour or so in order to stretch and walk.

STANDING AND WALKING ADVICE:

- Do not sit in the same position for longer than a few minutes. Shift from one position to another frequently.
- If you must stand for prolonged periods, put one foot up on a 4-8 inch stool. Alternate the left and right foot from being placed on the stool.

- When standing, toes should be straight ahead, while most of the body weight is on the heels.
- Avoid high heels, especially during activity or exercise.
- Avoid long walks when your pain is acute.

BED REST ADVICE:

- If your doctor prescribes rest, follow their orders. Avoid all exercise and activity which increases your pain or complaint. Getting out of bed while twisting and/or turning can put a severe strain on your back.
- When lying flat on your back, it may help to bend the hips and knees and keep the low back and knees supported with pillows.
- When sleeping, lie on your side and draw one or both knees up toward the chin.
- Sleep on a firm, flat mattress. A bed board (1/2-3/4" thick) placed between the mattress and box springs is an excellent support for the back.
- When getting out of bed, log roll to your side, without rotating your torso. Once on your side draw your knees up and arms/hands across your chest (simulated fetal position). In one smooth motion contract your abdominal muscles for torso support; let your feet slide off the table and with your hand and elbow push yourself up to a seated position. Once seated, use the correct motion as directed earlier to stand.

LIFTING ADVICE:

- Never lift with your legs straight.
- Do not lift from a bent forward position.
- Do not lift heavy objects from car trunks.
- Do not reach over furniture to open or close windows.
- Avoid carrying unbalanced loads.
- Avoid simultaneous bending and twisting
- To change (turn) direction while holding a box; pivot with your feet turning your whole body in one smooth motion.
- When two or more persons plan to lift something, they should decide in advance what each is going to do, this will avoid someone getting caught with a sudden unexpected load increase.
- When lifting, use the large muscles of the leg, not the back. This rule applies regardless of the weight of the object being lifted.
- Avoid heavy lifting early in the morning. Perform simpler chores when you first awake as this allows you to warm up and avoid an injury or increasing your symptoms.

APPROPRIATE LIFTING SEQUENCE:

1. Get a firm footing: keep your feet apart for a stable base with toes pointing out.
2. Bend your knees. Do not bend at the waist. Keep in mind how heavy the object you are lifting is. Do not do more work than you have to.
3. Tighten the stomach muscles: abdominal muscles support your spine when you lift (this helps to offset the force of the load while you lift).
4. Lift with your legs: let your powerful leg muscles do the work of lifting, not your weaker back muscles.
5. Keep the object/load close: the closer the object is to your spine, the less force it will exert on your back.
6. Keep your back upright: whether lifting or pulling down a load, do not add the weight of your body to the load. Avoid twisting, it can cause injury.
7. Keep your eyes and head upright and facing forward.

ACTIVITY ADVICE:

- *Minimize bending for the first few hours of your day.*
- Avoid sudden movements. Learn to move deliberately.
- A little exercise every day is far better than a whole lot on the weekend
- Before working in the yard or garden, remember to warm up
- To warm up, safely swing the tool you will be working with from side to side, around your head and shoulders. Gradually work up to the full range of motion and effort needed for the job.
- Always wear protective clothing, clothes that keep your perspiring body from getting chilled, or too hot on sunny days.
- Allow a gradual cool down time when done with your activities (don't cool down in a position of poor posture).

EXTRA CREDIT INFO:

- Avoid making the bed or using the vacuum cleaner when your back is bothering you.
- Moist heat can be very soothing and relaxing to an aching back. However, acute pain from a muscle spasm may respond better to some form of cold therapy.
- If you have any specific questions or want/need more information feel free to ask your doctor.

**Remember, you get one chance at a first healing,
make it your best!**