

BACK PAIN

By Vadim Mejerson, Ph.D.

Back problems could be called the plague of our adult population. Next to the common cold and flu, a back injury is the reason most often cited for work absenteeism.

Back problems affect 80% of the adult population in the United States, and can be directly linked to our sedentary life style, stressful activities at home and at work and to the overall level of physical fitness.

Most people believe that back injuries are the result of a lifting accident, or that something has slipped out of place and is causing pain. They also think that if there is a problem they can go to a doctor, physical therapist or chiropractor and have the problem fixed. **WRONG !**

Most back injuries are actually caused by the cumulative effect of five major factors:

1. Poor Posture - how we sit, stand, sleep or move.
2. Faulty Body Mechanics - how we lift, push, pull or move objects.
3. Stressfull Living and Working Habits - staying in one position for too long, not knowing how to relax.
4. Loss of Body Flexibility - becoming stiff and unable to utilize the full range of the body's movement potential.
5. Poor Physical Condition - losing the muscular strength and endurance necessary to perform physical tasks without strain.

Practicaly, if little can be done to effectively treat back pain, to prevent it's occurance and to reduce the effects of the existing condition certain strategies can be used:

BE KIND TO YOUR SPINE

20 tips to help prevent low back pain

EVERYBODY

(You and I)

1. Wear comfortable shoes. Women should avoid high- heeled shoes.
2. Put most of your weight on one foot and keep your other foot leaning on something a few inches off the floor when working or standing in one position.
3. Keep your abdominal muscles in top condition. A protruding stomach can lead to lordosis (swayback) a condition that places considerable stress on the posterior elements of your spine.
4. Keep your weight at reasonable level . Shedding unwanted and unneeded pounds reduces he load that your spine must support.
5. Get at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise at least three times a week.
6. Strengthen the lower lumbar extensor muscles of your back as safely, effectively and efficiently as possible.
7. " Do your best and leave the rest ": The ultimate guide for reducing and coping with stress, the frequent cause of back pain.
8. Sleep on your back, your side, not on your stomach.

OFFICE WORKERS

(Who sit a lot)

9. Get up from your desk occasionally. Avoid prolonged sitting.
10. Keep the weight of your briefcase and/or carry on luggage to a reasonable minimum.
11. Consider a waist-high or chest-high work surface as an alternative to sitting.
12. Obtain a chair with firm back support. The support should enable you to maintain lordotic curve in your lower back without undue effort on your part.

13. Avoid leaning forward while sitting to work at a desk or table.
14. Use a chair with armrests, if possible. Support provided by armrests helps to ease the load on your spine.
15. Keep your knees level with your hips and your feet flat on the floor while sitting.

FACTORY WORKERS/MOTHERS

(Who lift a lot)

16. Stand close to the object you are lifting, with your feet apart to ensure that you have firm footing.
17. Bend your knees, keeping your back as straight as possible by minimizing any bending at your waist. Bending at the waist increases the stress on your back. 18. Tighten your stomach before you lift. (Think of your abdominal muscles as your anterior back muscles).
18. Lift with your legs by slowly straightening them. Make your legs (not your back muscles) do the work.
19. Hold the lifted load close to your body. The further away an object is held from your body, the greater the stress it will place on your back. 21. Keep your back in upright position during the lift and while holding the object.
20. Avoid twisting your body while lifting. Move your feet if it is necessary to change directions or to see something not otherwise in view.

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