

Here are some things to consider when it comes to the health of your back:

Lifting



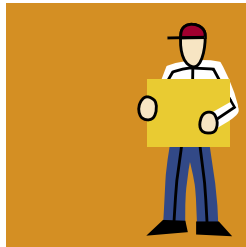
Maintain a natural posture.

You'll notice your lower back curves naturally when standing straight. Do your best to maintain this posture while lifting, lowering or moving.

This position assures the greatest spinal and back stability.

Hug that load.

Holding a load close to your belly and body reduces the strain placed on the muscles of your back and trunk. If required, wear protective clothing to prevent sharp objects from causing injury.

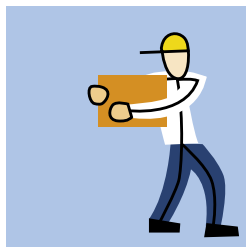


Flex your abs.

Contracting your abdominal muscles – or “bracing” – when lifting, lowering or moving improves your spinal stability. Even slight ab contractions can largely reduce your likelihood of getting injured.

Don't do the twist.

Twisting decreases the stability of your back and increases your likelihood of injury. Pivot with your feet to turn, rather than twisting your body.

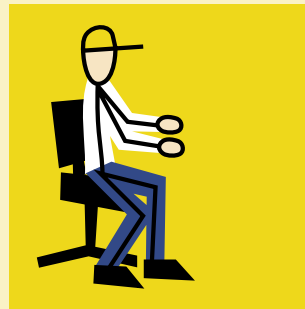


Posture & Sitting



Don't:

- Slump-sit (your low back should be supported).
- Lean forward and downward to reach your work.
- Sit for long periods of time without getting up.
- Sit on the floor.



Do:

- Sit close to your work.
- Sit in a chair that is low enough to place both feet on the floor and no lower.
- Have a chair that supports your lower back in a slightly arched position.
- Use an arm rest whenever possible to reduce stress to the upper body and neck.
- Remove your wallet or other bulky materials from your back pockets.
- Organize your work-station to avoid repetitive bending, twisting or reaching while seated.
- Remember proper posture when talking on the telephone. Do not cradle the phone in the crook of your neck.

Bending & Crouching

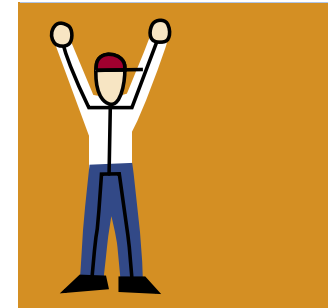
Whether you:

- Bend from a seated position.
- Bend from the standing position.
- Crouch on one or both knees.
- Crouch with both feet flat on the floor.

Keep your back straight, maintain your normal curve, support your weight and bend at the hips and knees!!!

- When bending or crouching, support your weight with the “free hand” by leaning on a desk, your thigh or whatever is available. Keeping your feet apart allows for greater stability and balance.
- When combining crouching or bending with reaching, stabilize yourself and maintain your lumbar curve.

Stretching



Taking time out to stretch can reduce accumulated tension and allow our bodies to move with greater ease and comfort.

Regular stretching will:

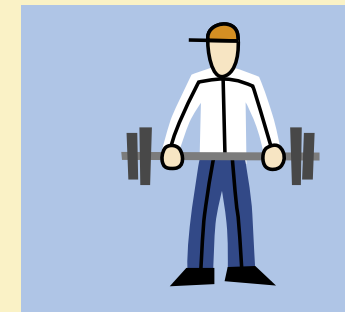
- Reduce muscle tension and allow you to feel more relaxed.
- Permit easier movement.
- Increase range of motion in all joints.
- Prevent injuries.
- Make activities easier because it prepares the muscles for movement.
- Develop body awareness.
- Help reduce stress and its effects.
- Feel good!

How to Stretch:

There is a right and wrong way to stretch:

- The right way is a relaxed and held (sustained) stretch with your attention focused on the muscle being stretched.
- The wrong way is to repeatedly bounce, bob, jerk or stretch to the point of pain.
- Improper stretching can cause more harm than good.

Strengthening



- Muscle maintenance is a life-skill. Incorporate simple core strengthening exercises into daily activities to ensure you work at building muscle strength on a daily basis.
- Remember to only push yourself a little bit in order to make progress. Start slowly, but be prepared to add to the difficulty or repetition of your exercises on a weekly basis. Form should never be sacrificed.
- Pace yourself and stay within your personal limits.
- Be comfortable and have fun. Don't strain yourself. A little bit of discomfort may be okay at first, but there should not be a lot of pain.
- Gentle, relaxed breathing is the secret for stretch-relaxation exercise.
- Whenever possible, avoid arching your back when exercising.
- Consult with a Chiropractor before starting your exercise program.

Assess your risk for back injury in your workplace

- The heavier the load, the greater risk to the back.
- If a twisting movement is involved in lifting a heavy load, abnormal stress will be placed on the back.
- Jobs with a vibration element, like driving a truck or other heavy vehicles, seem to predispose individuals to back problems.
- Conversely, jobs that do not have a lot of movement in them, like driving a car or sitting at a work station for prolonged periods, have the same predisposition for back problems.
- Jobs that have abnormal postures and create excessive muscular action or static loading also carry a risk factor.
- Situations where a weight shifts suddenly while being lifted can also create problems (an ambulance attendant's work, for example).

Causes of Back Injuries

- Improper lifting
- Poor posture
- Overexertion
- Medical factors (other disabilities)
- Slips and falls
- Excessive weight
- Lack of exercise
- Stress – physical and mental

Symptoms of Back Injuries

The symptoms of back pain vary depending on the injury and the person:

- Pain, tightness or stiffness
- Spasms
- Decreased range of motion
- Numbness, tingling, or burning into the legs
- Limited ability to sit or stand

References

Dr. David Imrie and Dr. Lu Barbuto, *The Back Power Program*. Stoddart Publishing Company Ltd. 1988.

Spinecare. *Industrial Safety and Awareness Program*, Brooklyn, New York.

Canadian Chiropractic Association, *What's Holding You Back?* Campaign 2003.

Northwestern College of Chiropractic. *Industrial Consultants Program*. 1992-93.

Chiropractic Consultants: Dr. Patricia Andrews, Dr. Greg Stiles

What's Your Risk for Back Pain in Your Workplace?

1. Do you stand for long hours on your feet?
Yes Sometimes No
2. Does your job require frequent bending or lifting?
Yes Sometimes No
3. Is your computer set-up and your office chair in proper alignment?
Yes Sometimes No
4. Do you make time for frequent stretch breaks at work?
Yes Sometimes No
5. Do you have a supportive chair for deskwork?
Yes Sometimes No

**If any of the questions above do not apply to you, score 0 for that question.*

Points

1. Yes = 2 Sometimes = 1 No = 0
2. Yes = 2 Sometimes = 1 No = 0
3. Yes = 0 Sometimes = 1 No = 2
4. Yes = 0 Sometimes = 1 No = 2
5. Yes = 0 Sometimes = 1 No = 2

Add up your score using the chart below. If you scored:

- 0-3 Congratulations! You're giving your back a helping hand.
- 4-6 Not bad but you may want to take a look at your back health habits.
- 7-10 Ouch! You may already be experiencing back pain which limits your work performance and overall lifestyle.

Note: This is not a clinical diagnostic tool. Consult a Chiropractor for a comprehensive assessment, diagnosis and treatment advice.

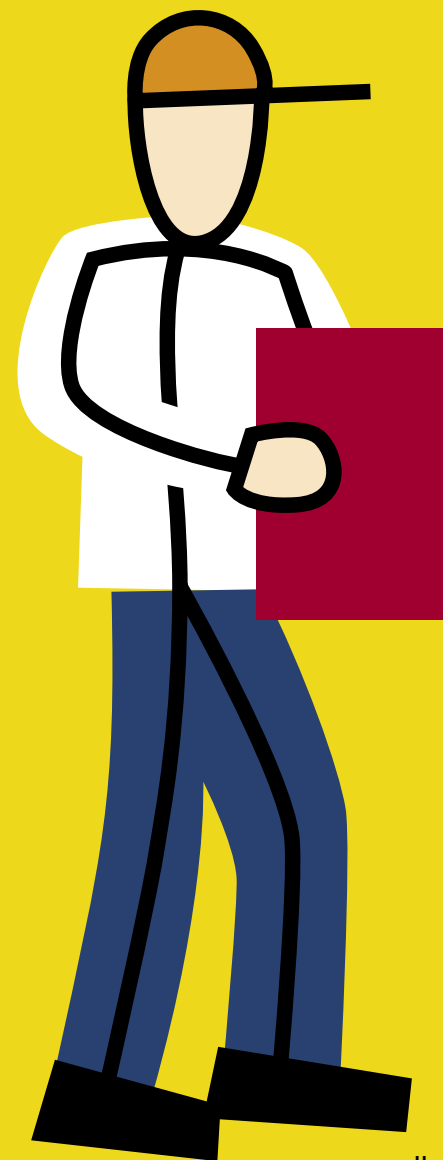
For more information on "Back Health in the Workplace" or to find a Chiropractor near you, visit:

www.albertachiro.com



Watch your back

Back Health in the Workplace



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We need to think of "employees" as athletes – occupational athletes.

Everyday, workers put their bodies through stressful demands. And just like professional athletes, occupational athletes need to be aware of their bodies and how they work.

The Back

The purpose of the back is to support the upper body, to protect the spinal cord and to allow flexibility.

The back has four natural curves at the neck, the middle back, the lower back and tailbone. These curves support your weight and absorb stress. The spine contains 24 hard bones called vertebrae. The vertebrae are separated by cushions called discs that absorb shock when you move. Fluid inside the discs allows you to move freely. Too much of the wrong type of movement can cause abnormal wear and tear which can lead to back injuries.

When you lift, most of the stress is absorbed by the spine in the lower back. To take some pressure away from the spine, increase your intra-abdominal pressure. Intra-abdominal pressure occurs with the simultaneous contractions of the stomach, back, diaphragm and pelvic floor muscles. When these muscles tighten, the abdominal cavity gives added support to the spine.