



Back Pain

Back pain can affect anyone – men, women, desk workers, laborers, young and old.

Causes and Indications

Common problems affecting the back are strain/fatigue, fractured vertebra, herniated disk and disease such as arthritis or infection. Potential problems result from:

- **Poor physical condition** – Poor posture (slouching, rounded shoulders, etc.), lack of exercise and excess weight can contribute significantly to swayback (excess forward curving of the back) and weakened muscles.
- **Chronic strain** – Jobs that require you to sit or stand partially bent over for long periods of time can result in excess muscle stress. Partial forward bending without changing position or reaching directly forward puts strain on both sides of the back. Bending over to one side puts strain on the opposite side. As chronic strain continues, muscles become less able to withstand strenuous activity and grow more prone to injury.
- **Fatigue** – Fatigue, tension and weakness also leave you vulnerable to back injuries. Working too long, too hard or holding the back in a fixed position can cause tension, tired muscles, weakness and less control of movement.

What Can I Do to Prevent Back Strain?

- Change position frequently if possible. Shift weight by alternating feet on a footrest during standing jobs or by taking periodic breaks away from your desk or terminal.
- Stretch periodically throughout the day.
- Adjust working heights to prevent slumping or excess reaching.
- Relax! Let shoulders and neck muscles go limp. Swivel your head gently and let it drop all the way forward.

Avoid Injuries from Lifting

When lifting an item, keep the load close to your body and directly in front of you. Keep your back as straight as possible, bend at the knees first and slowly raise up, lifting with your legs. Lift in a smooth, controlled manner. Don't jerk the load or twist your body.

Other Back-Saving Tips

- When standing, stand tall with head held high, abdomen flat and chest slightly up and forward.
- When sitting, keep knees level with hips and support lower back with a firm cushion.
- Sleep on a firm mattress or use a bedboard between the spring and mattress. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.

Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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