

## Preventing Back Injuries

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Because your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand, and run, it's important to take care of it. Most back pain arises from using your back improperly, so learning a few basic rules about lifting, posture and proper exercise can help keep your back in good shape.

### Exercise

Having strong back and stomach muscles is important in order to ease the work your back is put through each day. By doing simple back-toning exercises, you not only strengthen your back but also reduce stress and improve your appearance, too! Check with your doctor to see which exercises are best for you.

### Stay in good physical shape

Excess weight exerts extra force on back and stomach muscles. Your back tries to support the weight out in front by swaying backwards, causing excess strain on the lower back muscles. By losing weight, you can reduce strain and pain in your back. Check with your doctor for the most sensible diet plan for you.

### Maintain good posture

You can prevent many back pains by learning to sit, stand and lift items correctly. When you sit down, don't slouch. Slouching makes the back ligaments, not the muscles, stretch and hurt, thus putting pressure on the vertebrae. The best way to sit is straight, with your back against the back of the chair, feet flat on the floor and your knees slightly higher than your hips. Learn to stand tall with your head up and shoulders back.

### When lifting objects

- Plan your lift.
- Position yourself correctly in front of the load with your feet straddling the load, one foot slightly in front of the other for balance. Slowly squat down by bending your knees, not your waist, back or stomach. Using both hands, firmly grab the load and bring it as close to your body as you can.
- Lift with your legs, not your back. Slowly straighten out your legs until you are standing upright. Make sure the load isn't blocking your vision as you begin to walk slowly to your destination. If you need to turn to the side, turn by moving your feet around and not by twisting at your stomach.
- Set the load down correctly. Reverse the lifting procedures to reduce the strain on your back and stomach muscles. If you set the load on the ground, squat down by bending your knees and position the load out in front of you. If the load is set down at table height, set the load down slowly and maintain your contact with it until you are sure the load is secure and will not fall when you leave.
- Get help if the load is too heavy, bulky or awkward for you to lift alone.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.....

- What three things aid in preventing strain on your back?
- What is the process of properly lifting an object?
- Why is a strong back important to your job and your life?

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