Low Back Pain

Did you know?

It may surprise you to know that just being inactive can also harm your back, as can poor posture, wearing the wrong shoes or even carrying a heavy bag over one shoulder.

Protect your back when at work

For those who spend hours sitting behind a desk at work, make sure to:

- Stand up and move around periodically. It can save your back.
- Keep your knees slightly higher than your hips. Lacing a footstool or book under your feet.
- Place a small cushion behind your lower back to help maintain the natural curve of your back.

Protect your back when carrying your laptop

Still carrying your laptop bag on your shoulder? Try a roller bag, or even better, a backpack!

When using a roller bag, it is best to switch hands often to ensure you’re not unevenly taxing one side of the body.

When using a backpack, which could be your most ergonomic choice, look for bags with thick, padded straps and a sturdy construction. Adjust the straps so that the base of the pack doesn’t fall below hip level.

Avoid the “weekend warrior” syndrome

Are you a weekend warrior? That’s a person who reserves intense physical activity— exercising, playing sports—for just the weekend. During the week, you may not exercise at all because you’re too busy with work and family responsibilities. Weekend warriors are more likely to suffer painful back injuries than people who make moderate physical activity a daily habit. Studies show that regular low-impact aerobic exercise is beneficial for maintaining the integrity of intervertebral discs.

BONUS: Are you a smart health consumer?

This month’s tip: Low Back Treatment: Should I go for Surgery?

Evidence is growing that non-invasive treatment options can be a better alternative to potentially risky surgery, with potentially better outcomes. Here is a list of non-invasive therapies you may want to consider before surgery:

- Physical Therapy: also known as physiotherapy uses exercises and equipment to reduce or eliminate pain and rehabilitate the spine.
- Mobilization: slow, measured movements to twist, pull, or push your bones and joints into position to help restore flexibility and range of motion.
- Acupuncture: traditional Chinese medicine technique that uses very fine metal needles inserted into the body at specific points to stimulate the body’s natural healing.
- Keep Moving: lying down if you have back pain may actually make things worse. It is usually considered better to walk than to stay in bed. Unless specifically advised against by your doctor, try to walk for 10 to 20 minutes at a time every 2 to 3 hours. Be sure to walk on level surfaces, not on hills or stairs.
- Pain Medicine: for most low back pain, you can take over-the-counter pain medicine such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil or Motrin) or naproxen (e.g. Aleve). If your doctor prescribes a muscle relaxant for severe pain, carefully follow the instructions for taking this medication.

Sources: