

50 Things You Can Do To Save Your Back

- ▶ 1. Maintain your ideal weight.



- ▶ 2. Think before you lift. Plan your moves before you pick up the object.
- ▶ 3. Move your car seat as close to the steering wheel as is comfortable.
- ▶ 4. Know how to talk to your healthcare provider. Be able to state when the pain started. Describe the pain as specifically as you can. Ask about treatment options, and for advice on preventing future back problems.
- ▶ 5. Realize that your back is a complex system of bones, discs, muscles and nerves. Do what you can to protect all of these elements from over-use and injury.
- ▶ 6. Strengthen your quadriceps muscles.



- ▶ 7. Know how to manage the stress you are bound to experience.

▶ 8. Respect your medications. Both over-the-counter and prescription pain medicines can cause harm. Follow instructions carefully. Avoid mixing medications with alcohol or other drugs. If you are taking other medicines, get advice from your healthcare provider.

▶ 9. If you spend most of your workday sitting down, shift your position frequently to eliminate strain.



▶ 10. Men who are having back pain and urinary difficulty should see their healthcare provider. This could be a symptom of prostate disease.

▶ 11. Realize that disc injuries can be cumulative. Picking up a pencil can be dangerous if you have been using bad body mechanics.

▶ 12. Always bend your knees when lifting anything, whether it's a found penny, your young child, or a 25-lb bag of pet food.



▶ 13. Strengthen your back muscles.

▶ 14. Exercise aerobically in your Target Heart Range for at least 30 minutes, three to four times per week.

▶ 15. If you need to move an odd-sized object, use mechanical aids whenever possible.

▶ 16. Improve your flexibility. Do gentle stretches every day.

▶ 17. Know who can treat back pain. Medical doctors, physical therapists, massage therapists, and chiropractic physicians all treat back pain. Choose a program and provider that meets your needs.

▶ 19. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.

▶ 20. Wear flat or low-heeled shoes.



▶ 21. Be careful when getting heavy loads in or out of the trunk of your car. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, bend your knees and start to squat, bending at your hip joints not your waist. Tighten your abdominal muscles as you lift or lower an object into the trunk.

▶ 22. Avoid crossing your legs when seated at your desk or workstation.

▶ 23. Practice deep breathing. This is an excellent stress reduction technique. Too much stress often manifests itself as back pain.

▶ 24. Be sure to get enough calcium in your diet, and avoid eating too much meat, which interferes with calcium absorption.



▶ 25. Avoid twisting and lifting at the same time. Remember to keep your feet, knees and torso pointed in the same direction.



▶ 26. For typing or computer work, use document holders or other devices to keep papers in an upright position.

▶ 27. Drop down on one knee to pick up your toddler. Pull the child in toward your chest and push back to a standing position with your legs.

▶ 28. When driving for a long time, make regular stops. Take a short walk, or do some gentle stretching exercises to relieve the kinks.

▶ 29. Sleep on a firm mattress.

▶ 30. Know when your back is properly aligned -- your ears, shoulders, and hips are "stacked" in a straight line.



▶ 31. Learn self-care for back injuries. Rest in bed. Use ice packs to reduce swelling. Apply the pack for 20-30 minutes.

▶ 32. Use lifting techniques that support your back. Bend your knees and keep the load close to your body. Lift with your legs.

▶ 33. Sleep on your side, with knees bent. If you sleep on your back use a pillow to support your knees.

▶ 34. Listen to your pain. If you experience pain in your back, stop what you're doing.



▶ 35. Pay attention to what you eat. Too much fat, sugar, salt, even protein, can interfere with your good health. Eat a diet rich in complex carbohydrates such as rice, noodles, potatoes, vegetables and fruit.

▶ 36. Sit right -- keep your back straight, lean forward from your hip joint, and make sure the seat is flat or tilted slightly forward.

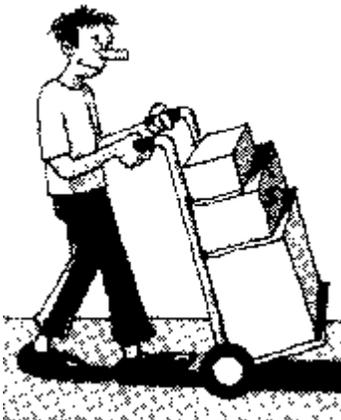
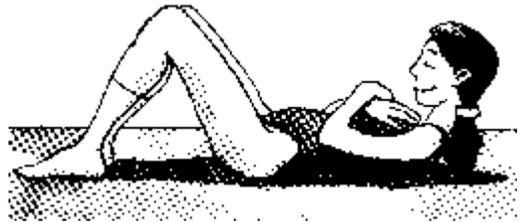


▶ 37. Test the weight of an object before lifting it. If it's too heavy for you to lift alone, get help -- a buddy or a mechanical aid.



▶ 38. Use a rolled up towel or pre-made lumbar support if your desk chair doesn't give your lower back the support it needs.

▶ 39. Strengthen your abdominal muscles.



▶ 40. Push, don't pull. You have twice as much power and less chance of injury.

▶ 41. Know when to call your doctor: If one or both legs are weak; if pain radiates to the buttocks or down the leg; if there is fever or a stiff neck; if you have painful or frequent urination, or if your urine is bloody; if the pain is a result of a fall or injury; if the pain lasts more than a few days.

▶ 42. Stand tall. Put one foot on a small footstool if you're on your feet for long periods of time. Keep your knees flexed, not locked.

▶ 43. If you have to lift an object that's above shoulder level, use a stepstool or ladder to avoid over-reaching.

▶ 44. Walk behind the vacuum or lawn mower instead of leaning forward or reaching out.

▶ 45. When you read in bed, prop up your back, shoulders, neck, and head so you're sitting up straight, and bend your knees.

▶ 46. Favor your feet. Pain from hammertoes, bunions, corns and calluses or ingrown toenails may make you walk to accommodate the pain, throwing your back out of alignment.

▶ 47. When lifting heavy objects, keep the load as close to your body as possible.



▶ 48. Watch your belly. If you carry excess weight in a "spare tire," you're putting an added burden on your back.

▶ 49. Split large loads into several smaller ones.

▶ 50. Realize that a disabling back injury can happen to you. On the job, use safe work practices at all times. If your employer has implemented operating procedures designed to reduce the risk of back injuries, always follow these procedures.





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