

# Managing lower back pain



Almost everyone experiences low back pain at one time or another. Maybe you felt a sharp sudden pain when picking up the laundry basket, maybe you felt that twinge as you twisted the wrong way when unloading the grocery bags from the car, or maybe you just woke up – everyday activities require our backs to do a lot!

**It's important to be mindful of your posture and ergonomics when performing everyday activities to help protect your back from injury.**

## Practical tips to prevent back pain

### BE CAUTIOUS WHEN LIFTING AND CARRYING OBJECTS

- Know your strength. Check the weight of the object before moving it and only lift as much as you can handle comfortably.
- Bend your knees and keep your feet shoulder width apart as you lift – make your legs do the hard work, not your back!
- Lift and carry objects close to your body.
- Turn with your feet as you lift as opposed to rotating at your knees or low back.

### PRACTICE GOOD SITTING POSTURE

- Sit in an upright chair that supports your spine with your knees level with, or higher than, your hips. Keep your ears, shoulders, and hips in a vertical line.
- Don't cross your legs.
- Sit with a rolled-up towel or other support behind your lower back.
- Stretch and walk around after 30 minutes of sitting.

## PRACTICE GOOD STANDING POSTURE

- Stand up straight and tall.
- Keep your shoulders back.
- Keep your feet about shoulder-width apart.
- Put your weight mostly on the balls of your feet.
- Put one foot on a low box or stool. Switch feet every few minutes.

## BE MINDFUL OF YOUR SLEEP POSITION

- Use a firm mattress or put a board beneath your mattress to add support.
- If you're a side sleeper, consider putting a pillow between your knees for better alignment.
- If you're a back sleeper, slightly elevate your legs and put a pillow under your knees and calves for better alignment.

## EXERCISE GOOD HABITS

- **Keep moving:** It's natural to want to avoid using your back when it hurts. However, exercise and stretching programs can help reduce pain, strengthen the back and increase your flexibility.
- **Wear appropriate shoes:** What you wear on your feet can have a big impact on your back. Try to limit heels and flip flops or flats without any arch support – this can lead to mechanical issues of the foot and ankle mobility and stability. Having cushioned shoes such as sneakers is always best – but be aware that you may need to break them in before increasing your activity in them.
- **Keep your purse or bag light:** If you wear a purse or bag, keep it light to reduce strain on your back and shoulders. Cross body purses are preferred as they disperse weight among your shoulders. If you carry a single shoulder bag, switch the side you carry it on regularly.



We know that back pain and discomfort can have a major impact on your quality of life. Talk to your doctor if your back pain doesn't go away or if you're unable to do activities you enjoy.

Because when our members have the resources they need to make their health a priority, **everybody benefits.**

