

Ergonomics for Your Back

PROTECTING YOUR BACK

Don't be a victim of back pain. Learning how to move and hold your spine properly will reduce your risk of back pain. Most strains and sprains to your back are caused by over-stretching the back's muscles and ligaments. Learning how to move correctly and position your spine properly will reduce your risk of back problems.

Most back problems occur when lifting due to:

- Incorrect lifting techniques
- Inadequate use of assistance (mechanical and/or other staff)
- Lack of worker fitness

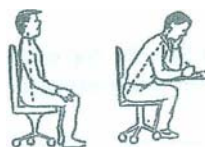
TO HELP PREVENT BACK PROBLEMS:

1. MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE

Wrong Technique



Right Technique



To help prevent strains to the lower back, maintain the spine's length at all times-not just when lifting. Slouching when standing or sitting puts a strain on your back muscles. This can cause your back muscles to be already tired out and weakened before you even try to lift anything.

2. BE PHYSICALLY FIT FOR YOUR JOB

A. GET ADEQUATE REST - If you are tired, your muscles are tired too! Stop periodically to stretch in order to ease away any muscle tension.

B. EXERCISE - Exercise should be part of your daily routine for the rest of your life. It will allow you to maintain good range of motion and strength of all of your joints. The best way to start your day at home is with back and leg stretches. Think of stretching like brushing your teeth: Don't leave home until it's done! Do strengthening~exercises and 30 minutes of aerobic activity 3 to 4 times a week.

Also, think of work as an athletic event.

Football players don't show up on game day without first preparing their bodies to work hard. You should do the same.

3. LEARN AND MASTER CORRECT LIFTING TECHNIQUES

Wrong Technique	Right Technique
Lifting with legs straight	Lifting with legs bent

With your feet at least shoulder width apart, bend your knees at the same time you bend at your hips, so that your hips push backwards and at least one foot stays flat on the floor.

Wrong Technique	Right Technique
Lifting with spine rounded	Lifting with spine straight

When you lift, you want the line of your spine to be straight. That's why your hips have to push backwards. Keeping your stomach muscles tight when you lift will help to support the back and keep it straight.



Always face whatever you are doing or lifting, Move your feet to turn so that you do not twist your spine, Move your whole body and not just your arms.

Wrong Technique



Load at full arm distance



Load close to body

When you lift at a full arm's distance, it puts a tremendous overload on your back. Always keep a load close to your body. Bend your legs to get close to a workload on the floor, use a stepstool or ladder if the load is above shoulder height.

Wrong Technique	Right Technique

Size up a load before you lift it. Don't try to lift objects that are too heavy for you or whose size and shape are too awkward to allow a good grip. Work as a team and use mechanical aids such as lifting belts around patients' waists, transfer boards for sliding or Hoyer's lifts for completely immobile or very obese patients.



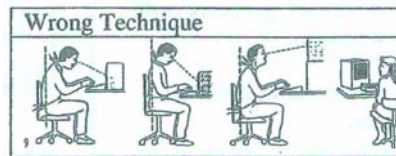
WORKING IN AN OFFICE & WORKING WITH COMPUTER TERMINALS

It is important to pay attention to posture when sitting for long periods of time. Even when sitting, you want to keep the spine straight so that you don't overtire the back's muscles and ligaments. This includes sitting at work, at meals, at home watching TV, playing video games, or using a computer.



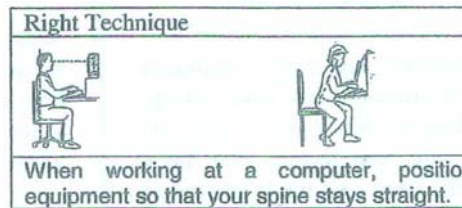
When sitting don't slouch

Use a chair that allows both feet to be flat on the floor or use a foot support (a phone book may work). Sit all the way back in your chair with the back of your low spine and hips firmly against the back of the seat. Shift position every so often as shown: don't sit or stand for too long at a stretch.



The monitor should:

- Be positioned so that your body and head are both facing forward
- Be no more than 16 inches away to avoid straining forward to see
- Be positioned to minimize glare. Try drawing drapes, adjusting blinds, or dimming overhead lighting
- Be adjusted so that the top of the computer is at about eye level when sitting at the computer



When working at a computer, position equipment so that your spine stays straight.

The keyboard should:

Be positioned so that when your elbows are bent to 90°, your hands rest comfortably on the keyboard with your wrists straight.