



COLBURN GROUP

Tips to Maintain a Healthy Back

After the common cold, back pain is the second most common reason that Americans call in sick, costing businesses billions of dollars a year. According to the American Pain Foundation, over 26 million Americans between the ages of 20 and 64 experience frequent back pain, and two thirds of American adults will suffer from back pain during their lifetime.

With prevention being the goal, here's what you can do to avoid back injury:

Proper Lifting

- Make sure the object to be lifted is properly balanced and packed correctly so the weight won't shift when lifted.
- Before you lift, test the weight of every object by pushing it. Just because it's a small object doesn't mean it's lightweight. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Take your time lifting. Rushing will strain your muscles.
- Bend at the hips and knees, not the lower back. Maintain proper posture with the back straight and head up. Use your legs to lift.
- Never twist. Keep the shoulders in line with the hips and face the object. Pivot at the hips, not the back.
- Get a good grip by using handles or tacky gloves. And avoid slippery or uneven surfaces.
- Keep the weight close to your body.
- Look before you lift to make sure you know where you're going to place the object.

Around the Office

- In a correct sitting alignment, the feet are supported, the hips should be level with or slightly above the knees, the spine is vertical or slightly reclined, and a small arch in the lower back is maintained.

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- If sitting at a computer, the shoulders are relaxed down away from the ears; the elbows are by the side, bent to about 90 degrees; the wrists are neutral (not bent up, down or away from each other), and the head is facing front without protruding forward.

Exercising, Stretching and Good Posture

- Regular cardiovascular exercise will make injury less likely.
- Perform stretching and strengthening exercises to increase back and abdomen flexibility.
- Maintain good body weight and don't smoke.
- Maintain good posture, even while sitting. Don't slouch or hold your head too far forward. Hold in your belly to keep it from putting excess force on the spine.
- Sleep on a mattress that is firm, not sagging, but not too hard. Try not to sleep on your stomach.