

Pt Sticker or, complete the following

Name: _____

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Physiotherapy

Taking Care of Your Back

When your back is painful, or your back is sending pain into your legs, it is very important to take good care of your back. You can reduce the risk of further injury, help it to recover faster and may also relieve your back pain. The positions you work, relax and sleep in make all the difference. Bending forwards and sitting slouched are the main dangers.

Sitting

- When your back pain is severe you should avoid sitting, even if this means standing to eat your meals for a few days.
- Then sit only for short periods, and make sure the hollow in the small of your back is well supported. Avoid deep sofas and soft chairs, choose an upright chair instead.
- You can use a lumbar roll (available from your physio or chemist) to support your back.
- Don't sit and read in bed. It is better to lie down flat, or sit up at a desk for a short time.
- Shower, don't bath. There is no support for your back in a bath and it's very difficult to get out again.
- Keep your feet on the floor when sitting. Do not put your feet up on a stool.

Driving a Car

- When your back pain is severe, you should drive as little as possible. If you have to go somewhere, it is better to be a passenger.
- As a passenger, recline your seat slightly and use a lumbar roll or other lumbar support. (No, the lumbar support built into the car seat is not enough.)
- As a driver, adjust your seat close enough to the wheel to allow you to comfortably reach the steering wheel with relaxed arms. Use a lumbar roll to support your lower back.

Bending Forwards

- Avoid all bending by:
 - washing your hair or shaving in the shower not at the sink;
 - not doing the gardening or vacuuming; and
 - making sure that the bench you are working at is a good height so you don't have to bend, or move to a different bench or table.
- Do not put shopping bags etc on the floor, keep them up at waist level by putting them onto a table or bench top.

Lifting

- While your back pain is severe, avoid all lifting. If you have to lift something, do it carefully and correctly:
 - keep the load close to your body;
 - bend your knees, not your back; and
 - lift by straightening your knees, one foot in front of the other.
- Avoid lifting and twisting at the same time.



25110 Advice or Information

Physiotherapy Department

Canberra Hospital

Level 1, Building 3

PO Box 11, Woden, ACT, 2606

Phone: (02) 6244 2154 Fax: (02) 6244 3692

Lying Down

- You need a firm bed. If it is too soft, put slates or a plywood sheet under the mattress, or put the mattress onto the floor.
- To get out of bed:
 - roll onto your side;
 - draw up your knees towards your chest, place your heels over the side of the bed; and
 - push upright into sitting using your inside elbow and outside hand.

Coughing and Sneezing

- When your back pain is severe you must try to stand or sit up straight as possible before you cough or sneeze.
- Coughing, sneezing, and vomiting increase the pressure in your spine and can be very painful. Taking medication to control these symptoms may be useful, and avoid people with infections, colds, and gastroenteritis.

Pain Relief

- Initially crushed ice wrapped in a wet towel is good to relieve pain and reduce inflammation. Have ice on for 20 minutes, repeat 3 hourly. Later, heat in the form of a hot water bottle (with a cover/towel wrapped around it), heated damp towels or a heat rub (used as per directions) is soothing.

Medication

Discuss with your doctor how to control your pain by using appropriate medication, pain relievers, anti-inflammatories, and/or muscle relaxants.

Summary

When your back pain is severe keep your spine straight. Bending, sitting slouched and lifting need to be avoided. It is better to stand up, walk around, or lie down.

If you have any concerns with this advice or exercises, please contact your physiotherapist