

body



Back Care Awareness Week

8th – 12th October

– Keep Moving, Keep Living

According to a survey published in 2000 almost half the adult population of the UK (49%) report low back pain lasting for at least 24 hours at some time in the year. It is estimated that four out of every five adults (80%) will experience back pain at some stage in their life. Although in most cases back pain is nothing serious and recovers spontaneously, the sheer number of people affected makes it a very costly condition with considerable burden to the individual and society. Simple measures can be taken to reduce the chances of developing back pain and the impact of existing back pain.

The costs of back pain

The National Health Service spends more than £1 billion a year on back pain related costs, including hospital costs, GP consultations and physiotherapy treatments. To add to this nearly 5 million working days were lost as a result of back pain each year. Back pain is the number 2 reason for long term sickness in much of the UK and in manual labour jobs, back pain is the number one reason.

Causes of back pain

In most cases it is very difficult to identify a single cause for back pain. In about 85% of the sufferers no clear cause can be pin-pointed.

The following factors could contribute to back pain:

- Having had back pain in the past, smoking and obesity.
- Physical factors such as heavy physical work, frequent bending, twisting, lifting, pulling and pushing, repetitive work, static postures and vibrations.
- Psychosocial factors such as stress, anxiety, depression and job satisfaction
- Emotions such as sadness, fear and worry may become stored in the body and eventually result in physical pain.

Eight Expert Tips for Avoiding Back Pain

1. Lift carefully. Keep the weight close to your body when you lift. Bend your knees, keep your back straight and don't twist at the same time as lifting. Most importantly, hold your tummy in tight.
 2. Avoid sitting for periods of more than 30 minutes. Use an upright chair rather than a low sofa, which offers no lower back support. The best sitting posture is feet flat on the floor, hips slightly higher than knees. Use a small pillow or rolled up towel to support the small of your back. Sitting on an exercise ball, or "wobble cushion" can also help, as they keep the muscles working. Don't sit twisted on the sofa with your legs curled up underneath you.
 3. Stand with equal weight on both legs. Don't "hang" on one hip as this will affect pelvic joint problems.
 4. Develop good sleeping posture. During the night, your body rests and recovers from the day so it's particularly important you have good sleeping posture. Sleeping on your back is best, with a small pillow under the knees. If you have to sleep on your side then put a pillow between the knees and make sure your knees are on top of each other – don't twist in to the recovery position. Never sleep on your front because it twists the neck and lower back all night.
 5. Strengthen your back. Most, sensible exercise is good for the back. Pilates is particularly good and it's usually best to join a class. Brisk walking, with your arms swinging and getting into a steady pace is also good for the back. Brisk walking does NOT include shopping, gardening or pottering around the house etc as this type can actually aggravate the back.
 6. Sit down to get dressed. It's much better than hopping about on one leg!
 7. Pick up children carefully. To protect your back when picking up children, bend down so that you have one knee and one foot on the floor, then encourage the child to "climb" up your thigh.
 8. Choose showers over a baths. It is easier to keep the natural curve of your back in the shower. Lying in a hot bath will actually relax your muscles too much and can make you feel worse once you've emerged from the tub.
- Thanks for Dr James Revell at Lushington Family Chiropractic Clinic for the information supplied. Contact 01323 722499 / www.chirocare.co.uk