

THE

C NNECTION N

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BACK CARE

Are you a middle aged male who smokes and is carrying additional body weight, especially on the torso (pot-belly)? If so, you have increased risk factors for low back pain.

Lower back pain is one of the most common musculoskeletal ailments and accounts for a large percent of occupational injuries and disabilities. It is also a condition that can often be avoided by relatively simple changes in habits.

Obviously, you can't do much about being a middle aged male but you can substantially reduce the likely-hood of lower back pain by some life-style changes.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

Some people experience lower back pain from heavy lifting or overexertion. Sometimes simply moving a certain way or being in a certain position will trigger the back pain. The pain can be a dull, annoying ache to an intense, stabbing or burning pain that is intolerable.

WELLNESS RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is important to stay physically active and to engage in regular stretching and strength exercises. "Partial Sit-Ups" work well to strengthen stomach muscles; "Bridges" strengthen your lower back, and "Wall Slides" will strengthen both your back and leg muscles.

Quit smoking! Smoking adversely affects the physiology of the intervertebral discs and is associated with a higher risk of back pain.

Use good posture and control stress to avoid the tightening of back muscles.

Learn proper lifting techniques and always consciously use these techniques at home and at work.



PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUES

Get Close to the Load: Get as close to the load as possible - as if you are hugging the object. Having the object close to your body puts less force on your lower back.

Maintain Your Curves: Keep yourself in an upright position while squatting to pick up. The head should be above the shoulders so that the ear is in-line with the top of the shoulder. The top of the shoulders should be over the hips.

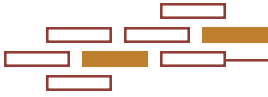
Tighten Your Stomach Muscles: Tightening the stomach helps support the spine. Don't hold your breath while tightening the muscles.

Lift With Your Legs: Your legs are the strongest muscles in your body so use them.

Pivot, Don't Twist: Turn with your feet, not your back. Your back is not built for twisting from side to side.

Large or Heavy Loads: If a load is too heavy, ask for help. Pick one person to coach the lift so you both lift and lower at the same time.

Overhead Loads: If the load is above your shoulders, use a step stool to elevate yourself until the load is at least chest level - preferably waste high. Pull the object close to your body and then lift. Remember to maintain your curves - use your arms and legs to do the work.



(Back Care cont.)

TREATMENT

The old treatment of bed-rest and inactivity for lower back pain is no longer suggested as it has been discovered that this actually causes more stiffness and can add to weakness of the muscles. It is suggested to use over-the-counter pain-relievers and continue with moderate activity as tolerated. Certainly, one should avoid heavy lifting, twisting and repetitive motions which could aggravate back discomfort. Several days of pain or pain that extends down a leg or leg and/or foot numbness or problems with urination indicate that a medical specialist should be seen right away.

Anyone who has experienced lower back pain can attest that preventative measures are much better than treating the problem after-the-fact.



**COLD
BUSTERS**

**Which common remedies
really work?**

Our noses are vulnerable to infection from about 200 different cold viruses. These infections cause runny noses, sneezing, sore throats and coughing - about 2-3 times a year in the average person.

In contrast, flu infections are much less common. They typically cause more severe symptoms, including fever and body aches.

When you're up against the common cold, what is your best remedy? Consider these popular myths:

Myth: A hot toddy will relieve symptoms.

Fact: Hot alcoholic beverages tend to dilate blood vessels and worsen nasal congestion and headache. Instead, try tea with honey or lemon.

Myth: Milk increases congestion.

Fact: Research show that people who drink lots of milk have no more nasal mucus than those who drink none.

Myth: Antibiotics cure colds.

Fact: If you have a cold, a virus is to blame, and there is no known cure. Antibiotics can't kill viruses - they're only effective against bacterial infections.

Myth: Kids need cold medicine.

Fact: A recent study concluded that over-the-counter cough and cold medications are not effective in children and are associated with potential side effects. (Pediatrics, 9/01) In adults the subject is under study.

Personal Best



HOLIDAY STRESS

The Holiday season is a very stressful time for many people. Stress is not something that happens to you but your reaction to a event or circumstance. Knowing this can help you reduce the effects of stress on the job and also in your personal life. Instead of anxiety or anger focus on your strengths and use these to help alleviate the stress.

To help defeat stress learn to realize what events or situations may cause you to become overly anxious. Try to avoid these situations and if you can't, ask yourself, "Is this really worth being upset over?" Forget the "small stuff" and concentrate on what is really important to you and your family. If you can do this you will have a much less stressful Holiday Season.

Myth: Feed a cold, starve a fever.

Fact: Your cold or fever generally won't be affected by diet. But when you're sick nutritious food can help maintain the strength needed to fight infection.

Myth: High doses of vitamin C work.

Fact: Despite its popularity, vitamin C has not been proven to prevent or cure colds. More effective remedies include getting extra rest and fluids, and not smoking.

Myth: Chicken soup won't help.

Fact: Studies show hot soup helps relieve cold symptoms in several ways. It reduces congestion by increasing mucus flow. Substances in the soup also ease airway irritation and inflammation.



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