Protect Your Back

CHALLENGE
Practice healthy-back habits

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Protect Your Back."
2. Create a plan to practice healthy-back habits.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

When Florida resident Jenny Hodges woke up in the morning, her back hurt. At nearly 400 pounds, moving around to do simple tasks was difficult for this mother of three.

Her back hurt so much she used a motorized cart to get around, but even sitting was painful. Then one day, after 10 years of living in chronic pain, she fell, badly twisting her knee and ankle. And the back pain got worse.

"I hurt everywhere," says Jenny. "I knew that to stop some of the pain, I needed to lose some weight."

She started doing low-impact exercises at a local gym. She pedaled a recumbent bicycle a few minutes at a time. She practiced healthy stretching exercises for her back before and after every workout. And she improved her diet.

Overtime, she lost over 200 pounds, significantly improving her health and eliminating the chronic back pain that once ruled her life.

Want to keep your back strong and healthy? Take the month-long health challenge to Protect Your Back.

Back to Basics

How much do you know about taking care of your back? Take this quiz to find out:

	T	F	
1.	☐	☐	Sitting for long periods of time doesn't stress the muscles, tendons, and ligaments that support your back.
2.	☐	☐	If you are overweight, you're four times more likely to develop back pain than healthy weight people.
3.	☐	☐	You can injure your back doing something as simple as picking up a pencil.
4.	☐	☐	Aerobic exercise, stretching, and strength training can reduce and prevent back pain.
5.	☐	☐	Practicing proper posture and lifting techniques can protect your back from injury.

How did you do? Your back, spine, and supporting muscles, tendons, and ligaments are a critical link to the rest of your body. Maintaining a strong and healthy back is important to working, playing, and enjoying a healthy quality of life.

Answers: 1. False. 2.True. 3. True. 4.True. 5.True.

A Back-Pain Reality Check

"Oh...my aching back!" Ever said that or know the feeling? When your back hurts, it can have a negative impact on your quality of life. For example…An estimated 31 million Americans live with back pain daily.[1]

- Back pain is one of the most common reasons people miss work to see a doctor.
- About 241 million missed work days in the U.S. are tied to back pain.
- 80% of adults will experience back pain at some time in their life.
- Lower back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide.[2]

5 tips for a healthy back
https://tinyurl.com/2y3766r7

11 Tips to Keep Your Back Healthy

FYI…surgery is usually a last resort for chronic back pain.[4] In most cases, back pain is not caused by serious conditions like an infection, fracture, or cancer. That means healthy lifestyle choices play a major part in preventing back pain.

Here are 11 ways to keep your back healthy:

1. Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight increases your risk for back problems. If you are overweight, losing just 10 to 15 pounds can help a lot.

2. Get regular exercise. Aim for 30 minutes a day of aerobic exercise. Regular strength training at least two days a week can also help strengthen your muscles and your back.

3. Eat healthy foods to get the protein, calcium, and vitamin D you need for a healthy body and a healthy back. You can do this by eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole-grains, legumes and healthy protein sources.

4. Warm-up before exercise. Before working out, playing sports, or doing other strenuous activity (like moving furniture or yard work), warm up with light exercise before engaging your back.

5. Practice good posture. Don't slouch when standing or sitting. When standing, keep your weight balanced on your feet. Your back supports weight most easily when curvature is reduced. At home or work, make sure your work surface is at a comfortable height for you.

6. Sit up straight. When you're sitting, use a chair with good lumbar support and proper position and height for the task. Keep your shoulders back. Switch sitting positions often and periodically walk around or gently stretch

How to prevent back pain https://tinyurl.com/7aus8prf

What Causes Back Pain?

For many, the pain is caused from straining or spraining the muscles or ligaments in the back.[3]
It's often a result of lifting something improperly, or poor posture.

Back pain may also be caused by:

- Being overweight or obese.
- Lack of exercise and sedentary lifestyle habits.
- Pregnancy.
- A sudden, awkward movement, such as sneezing unexpectedly or twisting "wrong."
- Accidents or sports-related injuries.
- Disk degeneration, illness, infection, and inherited conditions.

muscles to relieve tension. A pillow or rolled-up towel placed behind the small of your back can provide some lumbar support. Consider using a stand-up desk, instead of sitting at a desk.

7. If you must sit for a long period of time, rest your feet on a low stool or a stack of books. Or take regular breaks to stand up and stretch.

8. Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes. Why? Higher heels change your posture, and increase tension on the lower back.

9. Adjust your sleep position. Sleeping on your side helps reduce any curve in the spine. But if that isn't comfortable, try sleeping in a reclined position. Lie on your side with a pillow between your legs. Lie on your stomach with a pillow under your midsection. Or lie on your back with a pillow under your knees.

10. If you smoke, quit. If you don't smoke, don't start. Smoking reduces blood flow to the lower spine and causes the spinal discs to degenerate.

11. Practice safe-lifting habits. Lift with your knees, pull in your stomach muscles, and keep your head down and in line with your straight back. Keep the object close to your body. Do not twist when lifting. If it's too heavy to lift alone, get someone to help you, or find another way.

Seat belts save lives https://tinyurl.com/2p974c3e

Taking care of your back will keep you healthy and active so you can work, play, and enjoy life.

References

1. American Chiropractic Association. (2021). Back pain facts and statistics. From: https://tinyurl.com/2a8phcs2
2. Hartvigsen, J., et al. (2018). What low back pain is and why we need to pay attention. *The Lancet,* 391(10137): 2356-2367. From: https://tinyurl.com/ykfn3bsm
3. Harvard University. (2023). What's causing my back pain? Harvard Health Publishing. From: https://tinyurl.com/mr2hm5zh
4. Mayo Clinic. (2022). Back surgery: When is it a good idea? From: https://tinyurl.com/ybb5ppup

Protect Your Back

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healthy-back
habits

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar.
2. Take action to practice healthy-back habits.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to protect your back and make it a regular part of your life.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, each week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:					HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes		
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	
HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	
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HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	HC ex. min._____	

_____Number of days this month I practiced healthy-back habits
_____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

_____

_____

Name _____ Date _____