

## Q. What can I do to prevent back pain?

**A.** *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. But there are things you can do to prevent back pain.

**Did you know...** your posture, fitness level, amount of time you spend sitting, and even your diet are factors that determine the health of your back?

### Back pain at work

An estimated 31 million Americans live with back pain daily. It's one of the most common reasons people miss work to see a doctor.<sup>1</sup> About 241 million missed work days are tied to back pain. But it doesn't have to be this way.

### Here are eight ways to prevent back pain:

- 1. Exercise.** If you spend most of your days sitting, look for ways to be more active. A sedentary lifestyle can compromise the health of your back. Just 30 minutes a day of exercise can improve back strength and flexibility.<sup>2</sup>
- 2. Don't slouch** when standing. Keep your weight balanced on your feet. Your back supports weight most easily when curvature is reduced.



## 8 Ways to Protect Your Back

- 3. Use a stand-up desk or chair with good lumbar support,** proper position and height for the task.<sup>3</sup>
  - Keep your shoulders back.
  - Switch sitting positions often.
  - Periodically walk around or stretch for at least a few minutes every hour.
- 4. Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.** High heels and some boots can alter your gait, putting added strain on your lower back when you walk.<sup>4</sup>
- 5. Adjust your sleep position** until you're comfortable. Sleeping on your side or on your back may work. Supporting your back or hips with pillows can also help improve sleep quality and reduce lower back pain.<sup>5</sup>
- 6. Use proper lifting techniques.** 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. And if it seems too heavy, ask for help.
- 7. If you smoke, quit.** Smoking reduces blood flow to the lower spine and causes the spinal discs to degenerate.<sup>6</sup>

## ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

- 8. Eat a healthy diet** to reduce and prevent excessive weight, especially weight around the waistline that can strain lower back muscles. A diet with sufficient daily intake of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D helps to promote new bone growth.<sup>7</sup>

**Want to keep your back healthy and happy?** Give these back-pain prevention tips a try.

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