

# national chiropractic health month



## Ways to Prevent Back Pain

Men and women are well aware that minor aches and pains are part of aging. A balky knee that acts up on rainy days or an old sports injury that still triggers periodic discomfort may not be much to worry about, but a more serious condition such as chronic back pain can be so debilitating that it's wise for individuals to do whatever they can to avoid it or delay its arrival.

Millions of cases of chronic back pain undoubtedly go unreported. That's because many individuals accept back pain as a side effect of aging, while others lack access to health care, making it difficult to pinpoint just how prevalent chronic back pain is. However, the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 estimated that around 577 million people across the globe experience lower back pain, or LBP.

That prevalence should not give the impression that chronic back pain is unavoidable. In fact, various strategies can be employed to prevent back pain and all the negative consequences that come with it.

• **Be active.** The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion notes that physical activity strengthens the back and lowers the risk for developing back pain. The ODPHP recommends individuals engage in back-strengthening and stretching exercises at least two days per week. Chiropractors or personal trainers can recommend safe

back-strengthening exercises, which the Mayo Clinic notes include the bridge exercise and shoulder blade squeeze. Stretches individuals can try include the knee-to-chest stretch, the lower back rotational stretch and the cat stretch.

• **Perfect your posture.** Another way to prevent back pain is to make a concerted effort to maintain good posture. The ODPHP urges individuals to avoid slouching when standing and sitting and to stand tall with head up and shoulders back. When sitting, sit with back straight against the back of the chair and feet flat on the floor. If possible, keep knees slightly higher than hips when sitting. Alternate between sitting and standing to avoid being in the same position for too long.

• **Lift correctly.** Poor technique when lifting things, even items that are not excessively heavy, can contribute to back pain. When lifting items, do so with the legs and not the back. The ODPHP urges individuals to keep their backs straight and bend at the knees or hips when lifting items. Avoid lifting especially heavy items without assistance.

Despite its prevalence, back pain is not a given. Individuals can keep various strategies in mind to avoid joining the hundreds of millions of people across the globe who suffer from back pain every day.

## Be Aware of Tech Neck

**What are the symptoms of Tech Neck?** Headaches, stiff necks, neck spasms, and pain between the shoulder blades are common complaints. When you look down just 45 degrees, your neck muscles are doing the work of lifting an almost 50-pound bag of potatoes. That puts a lot of strain on your neck joints as well as your discs and contributes to them wearing out. In severe situations, you could get numbness, tingling, or weakness that goes down into your arms because of a pinched nerve in your neck.

**How can you prevent tech neck?** Most people have been told to sit up straight when working on a computer. Unfortunately, this is incorrect advice. When you sit with your back straight, you not only put a lot of force on the discs in your lower back, but the muscles in the back of the neck have to contract to hold the head up.

A better way to sit is with the chair reclining 25 to 30 degrees with good lumbar support to prevent slouching. In this position, the discs in the back as well as the neck are subjected to much lower forces than in an upright position, and the muscles in the back of the neck no longer have to contract to hold your head up.



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