

BACK TALK

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT YOUR BACK

Your back has two main purposes: it allows you to stand, supporting your arms and legs; and it protects your spinal cord which communicates messages between your brain and the rest of your body. The health of your spine can have an impact on your overall well-being.

There are three curves in your spine: two forward curves (neck and lower back), and one backward curve (middle back).

The curves of the spine distribute your weight. If the curves are too flat, your ligaments and muscles have to take the extra load and this may result in stress and strain. If the curves are too accentuated, your spine cannot distribute your body's weight effectively which can also cause problems.

Myth: Bed rest is recommended for back pain.

Fact: Bed rest may worsen your back pain unless your pain is so severe you cannot move.

Tip: Good posture and properly aligned spine can help prevent back and neck pain.

Myth: Applying heat is recommended for a sore back.

Fact: Applying heat may make the inflammation of the joint and surrounding muscles and ligaments worse. Ice is the way to go for at least the first three days of acute pain.

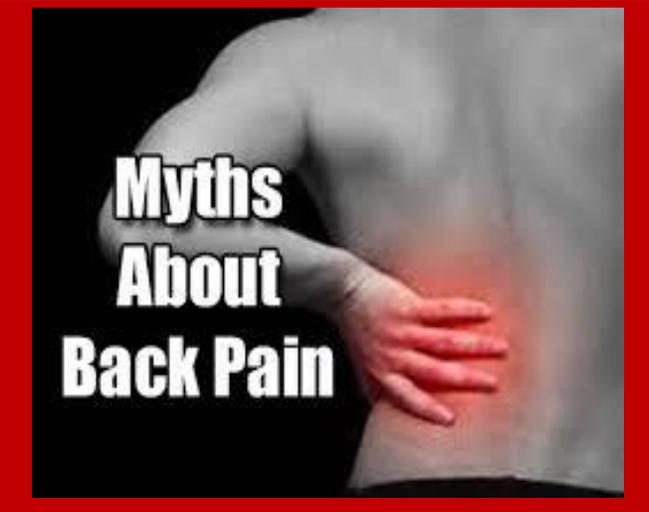
Tip: The disks of your spine contain water that keeps them cushiony so staying well hydrated with non-alcoholic beverages is good for your back health.

Myth: Pain is the main indication that something is wrong.

Fact: Your back may be in trouble and you may not feel it. Restricted movement or discomfort in your arms, legs and shoulders are also indication of spinal problems.

Tip: Core exercises such as balance, pilates, and gym ball are the best ways to strengthen your spine.

If you experience back pain that lasts for more than a few days, consider consulting a chiropractor for an assessment. Healthy spine and joint function boosts your energy and keeps you moving!



Indicators of a Healthy Back

1.) Good Posture: A healthy back can hold itself up straight with relatively little effort. Slouched posture puts stress on your spine, and even your lungs and stomach.

2.) Ease of Movement: Ease of movement means lack of stiffness or limitations when doing things like getting in and out of a chair or car, or bending over to pick up something. If you are usually stiff, your back may need a tune up.

3.) Range of Motion: Range of motion is about your ability to bend and turn your torso. For example, can you:

-turn your chin to your shoulder?

-go past your knees when bending forward to touch your toes?

-reach your knees with your fingers when bending sideways?

-tilt your head far enough back to see the ceiling without bending your back?

Reduced flexibility may be a sign that your spine is not moving properly.

4.) Performance: A healthy back should be able to sustain physical activities such as gardening or spring house cleaning, without being so sore the next day that you can hardly function. It is okay to be a little stiff, but not to the point where you have trouble moving.

Articles courtesy of :

Your Back Health: <https://www.chiropractic.on.ca/your-back-has-two-main-purposes-your-back-health>

Canadian Chiropractic Association:

<http://www.chiropractic.ca/resources/back-tips/>

POSTURE PERFECT!

Good posture not only makes you look better, it also delivers increased energy, better breathing, improved circulation, and less wear-and-tear on your joints. It's an investment in both your appearance and your health.

The secret to good posture is maintaining the spine's natural curves. If your spine is not properly aligned, your muscles and ligaments have to work harder to keep you upright and this can result in strain and pain. When you slouch, you also put pressure on your lungs and stomach. This can effect breathing, digestion, as well as blood flow.

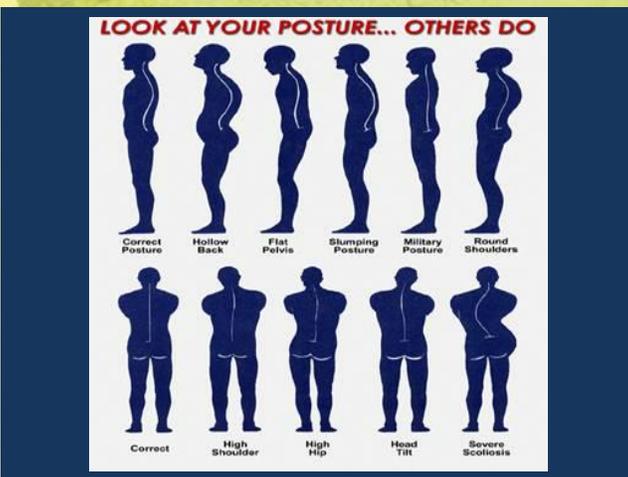
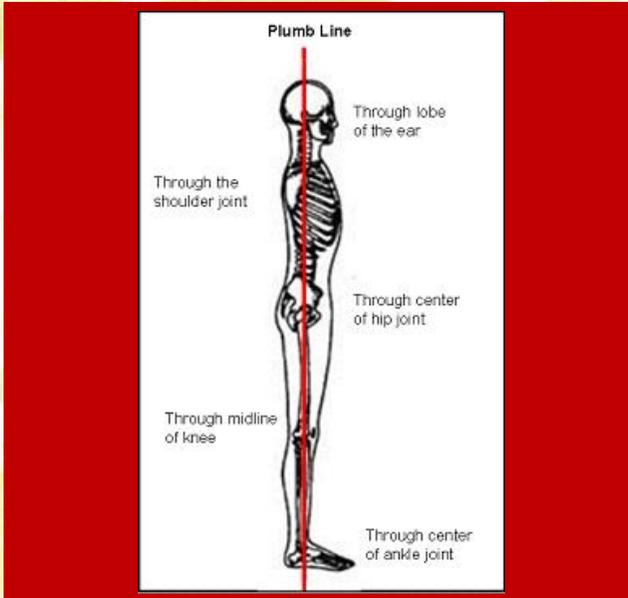
Does your posture pass the test?

Use a three-way mirror or have a friend help you check out these markers:

1.) When standing: your head, shoulders, hips and ankles should line up, one comfortably above the other. Your knees should be slightly bent and your feet should be shoulder-width apart or more.

2.) When looking at your back: are your shoulders and hips level or is one side higher than the other? Does your head tilt to one side or the other? Does one shoulder blade seem to be more prominent than the other? Do the muscles of the back seem more developed on one side, compared to the other? A health back should be symmetrical.

3.) When looking from the side: your neck and low back should curve to the front of your body, and your mid-back and pelvis should curve to the back. Postural distortions in the curves of your spine mean stress and strain on your back.



Dr. Reena's Posture Tips!

We have all heard our mothers (or Chiropractors) say, "Sit up straight! Fix your posture!", but what does that actually mean? For most of us that usually means pushing your shoulders back. Unfortunately forcing your shoulders back generally causes your head to poke forward, creating more problems.

My advice:

Instead of forcing areas of your body backwards or forwards and creating more abnormal stresses, imagine you have a string attached to the top of your head and someone is pulling you upwards. If you think about stretching vertically, your shoulders will automatically move backward, your head and neck will align normally above your shoulders, and the curves in your spine will normalize, negating any accentuations. In addition, you will be engaging your abdominal muscles, which help to support your spine, especially the low back.

Tips for Standing Tall

- If you use a bag or briefcase with a single shoulder strap, choose a strap that is long enough to place over your head and rest on the opposite side from the bag. This helps distribute the weight of the bag evenly and prevents distorting your posture.
- High heels throw your spine out of alignment, making good posture difficult and often leading to low back pain. A low-heeled, supportive shoe is best, but if you are devoted to your fashion footwear, try to restrict the height to no more than two inches.
- Try not to sit in any one position for a prolonged period of time. Take a quick stretch break or change positions every 30-45 minutes. For a quick and easy spinal stretch, stand up and raise your arms above your head.
- Strengthening your core back and abdominal muscles will help promote good posture by keeping your spine well supported.

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BACK PAIN

Low back pain is a major health issue. It affects 84% of the working population at some point in their life and is second only to the common cold as a cause of lost work time. But back pain does not have to hijack your sick days. Here are some universal 'back facts' to keep in mind if you catch yourself suffering from this pesky problem.

1.) Rest vs. Staying Active

If you are injured, you may have been told to rest until your injury has healed. However, avoiding exercise is the worst thing you can do when you are experiencing minor back pain. It is important to stay active when recovering from injury, but it is best not to exert yourself. You should reduce normal physical activities but continue to be as active as possible. At the end of the day, those who maintain active therapy recover quicker.

2.) Slipped Disc

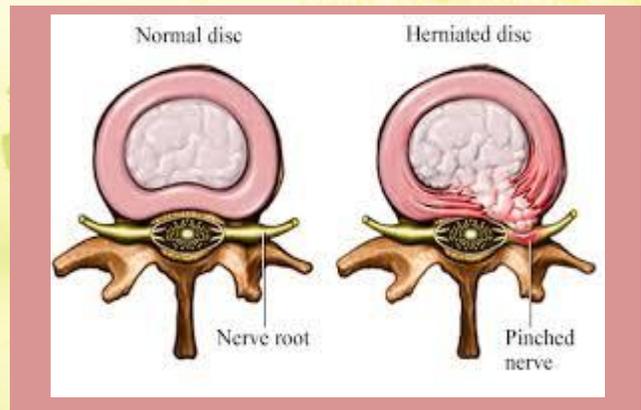
Your spinal column is made up of 26 bones (vertebrae) that are cushioned by discs. The discs protect the bones by absorbing the shocks from daily activities like walking, lifting, and twisting. Injury or weakness can cause the inner portion of the disk to protrude through the outer ring. This is known as a slipped or herniated disc and can cause pain and discomfort in your lower back. In most cases, a slipped disc will revert back to its position spontaneously, but it can take four to six weeks to fully recover. You may have heard it is best to rest your back if you have a slipped disc, but actually, remaining moderately active is ideal in order to keep your muscles and ligaments warm and reduce the risk of creating more tension in your back.

3.) Hot vs. Cold

Most people believe that a hot bath reduces back pain. The reality is that even though it may sound soothing, getting into a hot bath when muscles are inflamed can make the matter worse by increasing the inflammatory response in an acute injury. Generally, it is better to apply ice to an injury for 15 to 20 minute intervals, during the first 48 to 72 hours after the injury.

4.) Massages

When people have back pain, they often book the earliest massage. The truth is, when you're in pain, a massage may help in some cases and hurt in others, depending on the cause of the back pain. For instance, the lower back may feel tight because of muscle spasm occurring in an unstable region. A massage to this area without truly assessing the source and the reason for its tightness can inhibit the body's way of protecting itself and cause more instability, thereby causing more pain.



Normal vs. Herniated Disc

5.) Back Pain and Aging

No matter how many birthdays you celebrate, back pain should not become a normal part of aging. As we age, it's true that we can become more susceptible to certain types of painful back conditions. However, with all the treatment options available today, back pain does not have to be a part of the aging process.

Anyone experiencing back pain is encouraged to consult a health care professional to assess your specific needs and identity a course of action that is right for your specific condition.



TIPS FOR A HEALTHY BACK!

- Be posture-conscious when sitting, standing, and even sleeping - sleeping on your back or side is best for your spine
- Build your core muscle strength - that means the muscles in your abdomen, back and sides. Your muscles hold your spine upright
- Stay well-hydrated to keep the discs of your spine cushiony so they can do their job
- Practise good nutrition for healthy bones and muscles, and to prevent osteoporosis
- Take frequent stretching breaks to keep your back limber
- Practise safe lifting techniques. Keep your back straight, bend your knees and use your leg muscles to lift

Think about your back before it hurts! A lack of pain does not mean everything is working properly. A spinal assessment, especially after a fall or sprain, is a good investment in your back's health!

Articles courtesy of: Canadian Chiropractic Association - <http://www.chiropractic.ca/resources/back-tips/>



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