

Best Back Savers

- A **supportive mattress** can make a big difference. Backache upon waking each day can mean that your mattress is either too soft or too firm. One study found that a medium-firm mattress reduced disability related to low-back pain more than medical or physical interventions.
- Learn **proper lifting techniques**. Let your leg muscles do most of the work. Avoid twisting as you stand up.
- **Get help**. Lifting and carrying heavy loads beyond your ability can lead to acute back pain.
- If you sit for long periods, get up frequently to **stretch** or walk around. Sitting puts more pressure on your spine than any other position. And slouching irritates tired back muscles. Use a chair with a straight back or low-back support; sit "tall" with your neck straight.
- If you stand for long periods, **vary your standing position** to alleviate the constant pressure on your back. Try elevating one foot on a small box or stool, alternating feet at regular intervals when possible.

Extra weight, particularly in the belly region, strains the back muscles. Lose weight and strengthen your back and abdominal muscles to reduce episodes of backache.



- **Regular exercise** is your most potent weapon against back problems. Try walking, swimming, biking, dancing or other activities recommended by your health care provider.
- A **proper weight training** routine can strengthen your back muscles and offset undue strain.

Low-back pain ranks high as a common health problem: It's second only to headache as the most frequent cause of pain.



Protecting Your Back

1. **Size up the load — when in doubt, get help**
2. **Stand close; bend at your knees, not at your waist**
3. **Straighten up slowly, using your leg muscles**

Four out of five adults experience low-back pain at some point. One major cause is lifting incorrectly. If you lift objects at work, light or heavy, protect your body from injury with these tips.

Lift It Right

- **Think before you lift.** Size up the load. Never lift anything heavier than you can manage alone. Get help when you need it.
- **Clear obstacles** from your path.
- **Bend at your knees, not at your waist** — even to pick up something as light as a piece of paper. Keep your back straight.
- **Hold the load as close to your body as you can.** Tighten your stomach muscles and get ready to lift.
- **Lift with your legs.** Straighten up slowly, using the strong muscles of your hips and legs. Balance the weight of your load between both hands or shoulders.



- **Move carefully.** Keep your back straight and don't twist or turn sideways while carrying the object. Remember to unload slowly.
- **Don't take objects down** from shelves that are too high to reach. Use a sturdy stepladder and keep the object close to your body. Let your arms and legs do the work.
- **More lifting tips:** Always turn to face the object you are about to lift ... use lifting tools and lifting machines when possible.

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