



You work hard. So does your back.

Get relief from back and musculoskeletal pain

Your back and the rest of your musculoskeletal system work hard. Twisting, bending, lifting, pushing or pulling, and repeating the same motion over and over can strain your back and musculoskeletal system, which is made up of the bones and muscles that help you move.^{1,2}

Back pain is a major pain for nearly 80% of people.³ But there are ways to prevent back injuries.⁴

- **Keep floors and walkways clear and dry.** Falls from slipping or tripping cause a lot of back injuries.
- **Raise your work to waist level**, so you can avoid bending at the waist for long periods of time.
- **Rest often.** You're more likely to be injured when you're tired.
- **Use tools to move heavy materials.** If a load weighs more than 50 lbs., use a dolly, forklift or hoist.
- **Step instead of twist.** Lifting while twisting at the waist is bad for your back. Instead, turn your whole body to face the materials you're going to lift.

Daily exercises to strengthen your back

Repeat each of these stretches two or three times in the morning and again at night.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Use your hands to pull one knee to your chest for 15-30 seconds. Repeat with the other knee. Then repeat with both legs at the same time.
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Keep your shoulders pressed firmly to the floor as you roll your bent knees to one side. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat, rolling your knees to the other side.
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Arch your back so it feels like your pubic bone is pointing toward your feet. Hold five seconds, then relax. Flatten your back as though you were trying to pull your bellybutton to the floor. Hold five seconds, then relax.
- Start on your hands and knees. Slowly let your back and belly sag toward the floor. Then slowly arch your back, as if you're pulling your bellybutton to the ceiling.
- Sit on an armless chair or stool. Cross your right leg over your left. Brace your left elbow against the outside of your right knee, and twist and stretch to the side. Hold for 10 seconds, then repeat on the other side.
- Sit on an armless chair or stool. With your back straight, pull your shoulder blades together. Hold for five seconds, then relax.

Source: Mayo Clinic website: Back exercises in 15 minutes a day (accessed April 2016): mayoclinic.org.



Sources

- 1 Cleveland Clinic website: Normal Structure and Function of the Musculoskeletal System (accessed April 2016): clevelandclinic.org.
- 2 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke website: NINDS Repetitive Motion Information Page (accessed April 2016): ninds.nih.gov/disorders/repetitive_motion/repetitive_motion.htm.
- 3 Al-Otaibi, Sultan T. "Prevention of Occupational Back Pain." *Journal of Family & Community Medicine* 22.2 (2015): 73-77. PMC. Web. 29 April 2016.
- 4 The Center for Construction Research and Training website: Back Injuries (accessed April 2016): cpwr.com/sites/default/files/publications/Back%20Injuries%20New%20English.pdf.
- 5 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke website: Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Fact Sheet (accessed April 2016): ninds.nih.gov/disorders/carpal_tunnel/detail_carpal_tunnel.htm.
- 6 WebMD: Repetitive Motion Injuries (accessed April 2016): webmd.com.



Keeping motion injuries at bay

Have you ever felt numbness in your hand or a sharp pain in your arm or wrist? It could be an injury from repeating the same motion. Repetitive motion injuries (RMIs) usually affect the hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders.⁵ Strain causes tiny tears in your muscles and tendons. When the tears can't heal as fast as they are being made, the area becomes swollen and painful.⁶ With rest, most people fully recover from RMIs.²

You can prevent RMIs from happening and reduce symptoms. Here are a few tips for preventing and treating RMIs:^{5,6}

- Take 3-5 minute breaks each hour to stretch and give your body time to rest.
- Switch between tasks so you aren't doing the same motion all day.
- Adjust your work station so you're sitting in a natural position.
- Keep an upright posture. Avoid leaning forward or backward more than you have to.
- Hold tools as loosely as you can.
- Use splints to lessen pressure on the muscles and nerves in your hands and wrists.
- Wear fingerless gloves to keep the muscles in your hands and fingers warm.
- Put ice on an area that gets stiff or sore.
- To relieve soreness and pain, try physical therapy.

On-the-job tips

Sitting or standing in a certain position for a long time can be hard on your body. And any sort of job where you have to do the same motion over and over can cause stress to your bones and muscles. Having an adjustable chair or stool at your workstation can help you be more comfortable. Try to find more than one comfortable position for your chair or work surface, so you can change positions instead of straining the same set of bones and muscles all day long.⁵

Go to anthem.com/ca for more ways to get healthy — and stay healthy.

Resources

To learn more about the causes of back pain, and for exercises that can help relieve it, search for the Back Pain Health Center on WebMD.com.

