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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Another Household Injury

There are many different things you do in your home that may cause an injury. Two of the more common ones are the using the stairs and getting in or out of the bathtub. However, there is one particular activity that is very troublesome for people who are prone or vulnerable to bouts of low back pain. Believe it or not, it is vacuuming.



Unfortunately, all types of floors require sweeping or vacuuming at some time each week. When you have a back condition, this can prove to be a painful task. The handles of most vacuum cleaners are made to reach to waist level, supposedly preventing you from having to bend while operating it. However, we live in a fast pace society where the time allotted for household chores each week is limited. To complete the task of vacuuming as quickly and efficiently as possible, we all use long strokes and reach as far in front of us as possible. When you reach out in front of you to suck up that nasty little ball of hair and dust, your upper and lower back must repetitively bend forward.

When bending to reach forward, the concave curve in your low back should always be maintained. To do this, you have to almost "stick your butt out backwards" as you bend forward. Close the curtains so your neighbors won't laugh and try this the next

time you vacuum. An even better technique is to not bend over at all. Operating the vacuum at your side instead of reaching out front can do this. This method allows you to cover a smaller area with each stroke but it will keep your body upright the entire time. This is the method I recommend people use if they already have a back condition.

When you combine the repetitive bending that most of us do when vacuuming with not maintaining proper posture, poor low back muscle strength/flexibility, or inadequate mobility of the low back joints, problems will eventually arise. If the muscles in your low back, hip, and back of your legs are too tight, you may have problems bending over with a concave curve remaining in your low back. If this is the case, you need to do some stretching exercises or you will eventually have problems doing other activities as well. You can contact me at my office for the necessary muscle stretches. As well, if the joints in your low back are stiff and lack their full mobility, you are also prone to problems. Stiff and irritated joints can be easily aggravated if challenged repetitively, as in vacuuming. Inflamed joints can irritate the neighboring nerves that exit the spine. When this happens, the nerves produce the sensation of severe pain and will make the muscles of the low back go into spasm.

To prevent problems in the low back from arising when tackling any household chores, you have to maintain good flexibility and joint mobility. Your chiropractor is specifically trained to help you accomplish this. Stretching and strengthening exercises for your low back are available on my website (www.merrittchiro.com). If you have any further questions, please call me at my office.