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

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## Watch For Early Signs of Back Pain

One of the most common physical problems in society today is lower back pain. For those of you who have a sedentary job, such as sitting, standing, or being hunched over an office desk/computer, you are particularly at risk. However, if you are able to recognise and understand the early symptoms of an eventual mechanical low back problem, you could seek conservative treatment before it becomes debilitating.

With the initial stages of mechanical low back pain, you may simply feel stiffness in your back when you get up in the morning that dissipates quickly as you begin to move around. Or, you may feel anything from jabs of sharp pain that disappear quickly to a sensation of weakness in your lower back. Since most of these symptoms are short term, many people ignore them with the belief that "it will go away on its own". Unfortunately, this "wait and see" attitude often leads to an eventual acute bout of mechanical low back pain after even the simplest of activities.

Think I am kidding? From patients I have personally treated, the following are a few activities that triggered a bout of severe pain in an already stiff and vulnerable low back. Here we go: straining during a bowel movement, a sneeze, a cough, intercourse (don't laugh, it could happen to you), bending over to pick up a shoe, leaning over to spit after brushing teeth, and even simply getting up from the toilet.

Enough said? Here are a couple simple exercises you can do at home to prevent your back from becoming vulnerable to a bout of mechanical low back pain.

1. Find somewhere quiet and lie down with your arms at your sides, knees bent and soles of your feet in contact with the floor. Tense your stomach muscles, drawing your stomach in and flattening your back against the floor. Keep breathing normally and hold it for five seconds. Now relax your stomach. Carry out two further repetitions of the above.
2. Lying flat on your back, extend your right leg so that it is flat to the floor and keep the left leg bent at the knee. Keep the palms of your hands flat to the floor and bring your left knee (still bent) across your right leg, making your low back rotate from left to the right. If you can, attempt to touch the floor with it. Hold for fifteen seconds. If you can't reach

all the way over to the floor, don't push it. Bring your left leg back to the start position and relax. Repeat this two more times and then three further repetitions with the other knee.

If these simple exercises don't clear up all of your even mild low back symptoms, seek conservative care from your chiropractor. Chiropractic manipulation will restore the normal and full range of motion to the individual joints within the spine and pelvis, allowing them to remain healthy. Once this is accomplished, you must do your part by exercising regularly to help maintain this normal joint range of motion. If you would like more low back stretches and exercises, log onto my website at [www.merrittchiro.com](http://www.merrittchiro.com) and click on the "free stretches and exercises" section.