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

Further Tips For Your Back

Every week I try to pick a specific topic or problem to address in this newspaper article. This week I thought I would try to be more general so that the information I provide will apply to more people. Therefore, I will discuss some general do's and don'ts that you can apply to your work and life in general that may help you prevent a back injury from occurring.

First, always maintain a natural posture. You will notice that your lower back curves naturally when you stand straight. Do your best to maintain this posture while lifting, lowering, or moving. This position assures the greatest spinal and back stability.

Second, holding a load close to your belly and body reduces the strain placed on the muscles of your back and trunk. If required, wear protective clothing to prevent sharp objects from causing injury.

Third, flex your abdominal muscles. Contracting these muscles or "bracing" when lifting, lowering, or moving improves your spinal stability. Even slight abdominal contractions can greatly reduce your likelihood of getting injured.

Fourth, do not twist your back while lifting. Twisting decreases the stability of your back and increases your likelihood of injury. To turn, pivot with your feet rather than twisting your body.

Fifth, maintain good posture and sit with good ergonomics. Organize your workstation to avoid repetitive bending, twisting, or reaching while seated. Sit in a chair that is low enough to place both feet on the floor, but no lower than that. Have a chair that supports your lower back in a slightly arched position. Use an armrest whenever possible to reduce stress to the upper body and neck. Remove your wallet or other bulky materials from your back pockets. Remember proper posture when talking on the telephone. Sit close to your work. Do not sit slumped or slouched forward, as this does not support your lower back. Do not lean forward and downward to reach your work. Do not sit for long periods of time without getting up. Do not cradle the telephone in the crook of your neck. Do not sit on the floor to do your work.

Sixth, taking time out to stretch can reduce accumulated tension and allow your body to move with greater ease and comfort. While stretching, do not repeatedly bounce, bob, jerk, or stretch to the point of pain.

The next time you are sitting at your computer or doing any physical activity, keep these tips in mind. If you have been going through life without being conscious of the above concepts, I can almost guarantee that your back would benefit from a chiropractic examination and potential treatment.