

Motions of Daily Life

Motions of daily life, if done incorrectly, can result in injury to the spine creating pain and discomfort. The following tips will help you avoid compromising positions and help keep you feeling your best.

Following these daily activity recommendations will help you:

1. Reduce Pain, back and neck pain
2. Hold your spinal adjustment longer
3. Help prevent further injury
4. Improve posture

Sitting

- Choose a chair that is firm enough to support you comfortably
- Slouching is never a good idea! Keep your "butt bones" on the seat; your low back is not there for you to "sit" on.
- Sit with your feet flat on the floor or on a low footstool so that your knees are slightly higher than your hips.
- Sit firmly against the back of the straight chair or sit on the edge of a chair that does not give you proper back support can aggravate existing back conditions and interfere with circulation to your lower limbs.
- Avoid crossing your ankle over the knee. This stretches the ligaments in the pelvis and creates instability of the pelvis over time.
- If you need to cross your legs please cross at the ankles keeping your knees/thighs parallel to the floor.

Standing

- Stand with your head level or slightly looking up. Do not stand with your chin forward.
- Your shoulders should be relaxed, no shoulders as earrings.
- The shoulders should not be rounded forward, if you see your shoulders slightly forward, work on the strength of your back muscles. (You can exam this by standing relaxed facing a mirror, if the back of your hands are easily seen while standing in a neutral relaxed position your shoulders are rounded forward.)
- Keep your knees slightly bent (unlocked) while standing, this takes pressure off your low back.
- Keep your weight evenly distributed on both feet. (Imagine four points on the bottom of each foot, one on the ball of your foot near your big toe, another across from the first but near the ball of the little toe, and two on the heel. Keep your weight distributed evenly between these four points.)
- When you need to stand in one place for a prolong period of time, put one foot on a 4-6-inch stool to help keep pressure off your spine. Switch off and on as needed between feet on the stool and off.
- Avoid wearing high heels if you are going to be on your feet for long periods of time.

Working at a Desk

- Take frequent stretch breaks if you have to sit for a long period of time.
- Sit with your knees at a 90-120-degree angle. An angled footrest may help you feel more comfortable.
- Make sure your chair fits correctly (see above sitting suggestions). Allow for two inches between the front edge of the seat and the back of your knees.
- Elevate materials or your computer screen to avoid looking downward. Looking downward strains neck and upper back muscles and decreases the cervical curve over time.

Lifting

- Avoid twisting and turning motions when you lift. If you have to turn to place the object, step in the direction of the turn, do not twist at the waist.
- Always bend at your knees and hips, not your waist when lifting anything heavier than 10 pounds.



- When lifting an object, plant your feet about 12-18 inches apart, squat in front of the object, and lift as you straighten from the squatting position. Be sure to lift with the leg and butt muscles, not with your back.
- In some situations, it is difficult to lift correctly. Getting grocery bags out of the trunk or lifting your child from the car seat are examples. The car bumper doesn't allow you to bend your knees. Bring the object to you first and then lift carefully. Always keep the abdominal muscles tight when lifting your child from the car seat.
- When engaging in repetitive lifting, use good lifting form, take frequent breaks, and use equipment to help whenever possible.

Physical Activity / Household Chores

- Warm up and cool down before and after physical activity like playing sports, raking, gardening, and shoveling snow.
- When working with hand-held yard equipment, make sure that the machine you are using has a strap. Place the strap over your head and shoulder on the opposite side of your body from the machine and switch the machine from one side of your body to the other as often as possible. Use electric rather than gas-powered machines whenever possible; they are much lighter.
- When washing dishes, open the cabinet beneath the sink, bend one knee, and put your foot on the shelf under the sink. Lean against the counter for support if needed. Always unlock the knees and bend from the hips not the low back when working on a surface that is slightly lower than arms reach.
- When ironing, place one foot on a small stool or a book.
- When vacuuming, put all your weight on one foot, then step forward and back with the other foot as you push the vacuum. Use your back foot as a pivot when you turn.

Using the Telephone

- When using the telephone, avoid cradling the receiver between your neck and shoulder. Hold the phone in your hand or use speakerphone instead.
- If you use the phone a lot, use a lightweight headset.
- Switch hands frequently when handling the receiver.

Resting/Sleeping

- Don't use a sofa arm as a pillow or watch TV in bed with your head supported by pillows or your arms; this strains your neck.
- Avoid sleeping on a soft mattress or sofa.
- Sleep on your side with your knees slightly bent or on your back with a pillow under your knees if lying on your back creates stress/pain. NO sleeping on your stomach.
- Use a pillow that supports your head so that your neck and vertebrae are level with the rest of your spine as you sleep. Avoid sleeping with two pillows under the head. This strains the neck muscles and over time decreases the cervical/neck curve. Use a pillow that is firm but not hard which supports the natural curvature of your spine. The pillow should be placed underneath the top of the shoulder to support the neck and head. Keep your head in line with the spine; no angles.
- Avoid tucking your chin towards your chest while sleeping.
- Be sure to get plenty of sleep every day to allow your body to repair. Men should be in bed by 10:30 and Women by 10:00 to allow for optimal healing. Keep the minimum hours of sleep to 7 and maximum to 10 hours per night

Driving

- Keep the seat in an upright position
- Sit with your sternum/breast bone in line with your steering wheel to avoid leaning to one side
- Keep both feet at the same distance apart from your torso, in most vehicles there is a foot rest for your left foot while driving
- Adjust your head rest so that it does not push your head forward
- Adjust your rearview mirror at the start of the drive and not during, if you see the need to lower the angle you have slouched, adjust YOUR sitting posture

