

FREE REPORT

MANAGING BACK PAIN

**SUGGESTIONS FOR
MAKING DAILY ACTIVITIES
LESS PAINFUL**

BY: AVALON LASER HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPY & WELLNESS

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Health Advice Disclaimer: These tips are the kind of suggestions we make every day at Avalon Laser Health. The difference is that we know our clients and their movement limitations, unfortunately we do not know yours. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation, and are not intended to be medical advice. You should consult with your health care provider where appropriate. ***You know your body best, if your pain continues after 48 hours, seek professional advice. Book your appointment to see our physiotherapist for a complete assessment and the individualized treatment plan that can make all the difference to your health.***

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Section 1

Body Mechanics For Daily Tasks

Actions To Address:

- ✓ **Sleeping Posture with Mattresses & Pillows**
- ✓ **Getting Into & Out Of Bed**
- ✓ **Standing Posture**
- ✓ **Sitting Posture For Office Chairs**
- ✓ **Walking Posture**
- ✓ **Driving Posture**
- ✓ **Lifting & Carrying**
- ✓ **Pushing & Pulling**

READ THIS BEFORE YOU GET STARTED...

If you have suffered an injury, everyday activities can become very difficult. The following suggestions are intended to help those living with back pain. No generic list can match the needs of every condition. Use this information with care and notice if any movement causes your symptoms to worsen.

If you experience pain and discomfort following activity or injury, follow the R.I.C.E protocol:

Rest / Ice / Compression / Elevation

If your symptoms do not improve within 48 hours seek professional help. Early intervention with the help of your therapist is really the best plan when dealing with physical injury.

At Avalon Laser Health, our professionals use laser therapy following an acute injury to reduce pain and inflammation and accelerate the body's natural healing. If the injury is chronic, the laser advantage lies in its ability to restart the body's natural healing and most clients see lessening of the pain and increased function related to that injury.

If you have any questions about your particular injury, reach out to us and ask. We are here to help you get back to living.

Body Mechanics for Common Activities

Using proper body mechanics can prevent back injury, help speed recovery if you are already injured, and prevent further injury after your injury has healed. To protect your back during everyday activities, check the following suggestions.

Sleeping posture with Mattresses & Pillows

When you have back pain, sleeping can be very difficult. For this reason, how you sleep can greatly affect your recovery. Here are some things you may try to provide relief to promote healthy sleep habits:

Choose a relatively firm mattress for proper back support, taking in to consideration personal preferences.

- ✓ Sleeping on the side or back is usually more comfortable for the back than sleeping on the stomach.
- ✓ Use a pillow to provide proper support and alignment for the head and shoulders.
- ✓ For back sleepers, placing a rolled-up towel under the neck and a pillow under the knees provides better support for the spine.
- ✓ For side sleepers, a flat pillow placed between the legs will keep the spine aligned and straight.

If you've been recently injured and advised to lay flat on your back, limit bed rest on the back to 1-2 days. After that, get up,

move around, and go for short walks to keep the spine and muscles moving.

- ✓ If you sleep on your back, a small pillow under the knees may help.
- ✓ While lying in bed, do not raise your arms over your head.
- ✓ If your bed is too soft, it may help to place a piece of plywood between the mattress and box spring. 5/8" or 3/4" plywood should work well.
- ✓ Mattress sets do have a best before date. If you are experiencing back pain, check how long you have been sleeping on the same mattress and box spring. Many sleep sets are intended to be replaced after 5- 10 year

Getting Into & Out Of Bed

Many back pain conditions stem from improper body mechanics during daily activities. There are several ways to get in and out of bed safely:

- ✓ To move from lying on your back, bend knees up and roll to your side. Slide legs off the edge of the bed with your knees bent. Push up with your arms, using your legs as a counter weight and sit up.
- ✓ To move from sitting to lying down, reverse the procedure. Begin sitting on the bed. Lower yourself down to your side, using your arms for support, once you are lying on your side, you may slide the legs up onto the bed. To roll onto your back, keep knees bent and roll onto back.

Standing Posture

- ✓ Stand with your weight balanced mostly on the balls of the feet, not with weight on the heels
- ✓ Keep feet slightly apart, about shoulder width.
- ✓ Avoid locking the knees.
- ✓ Let arms hang naturally down the sides on the body.
- ✓ Keep the head square on top of the neck and spine, not pushed out forward.
- ✓ Stand up, straight and tall with shoulders upright.
- ✓ If standing for a long period, shift weight from one foot to the other, or rock from heels to toes.
- ✓ Stand against a wall with shoulders and bottom touching wall. In this position the back of the head should also touch the wall – if it does not, the head is jutting too far forward (called “anterior head carriage” by your Physio!).

Sitting Posture for Office Chairs

- ✓ Be sure your back is aligned against the back of the office chair. Avoid slouching or leaning forward, especially when tired from sitting in the office chair for long periods of time
- ✓ For long-term sitting such as in an office chair, purchase an ergonomically designed chair to properly support your back. Make sure it is a custom fit.

- ✓ When sitting on an office chair at a desk, the arms need to flex at a 90-degree angle at the elbows and to your side. If this is not the case, adjust the office chair accordingly.
- ✓ Knees should be even with the hips or slightly higher when sitting in the office chair.
- ✓ Keep both feet flat on the floor. If your feet do not reach the floor comfortably, we recommend using a footrest.
- ✓ Sit in the office chair with the shoulders straight.
- ✓ Don't sit in the one position for too long, even if the ergonomic set-up offers good support. Get up and walk around and stretch frequently
- ✓ If you are able, invest in a standing/sitting desk set up to enable you to vary your position when sitting long hours at the desk.

Walking Posture

- ✓ Keep your head up and the eyes looking straight ahead of you.
- ✓ Avoid pushing your head forward.
- ✓ Keep your shoulders properly aligned with the rest of the body and avoid rolling your hands forward.

Driving Posture

- ✓ Sit with your back firmly against the seat for proper back support
- ✓ Check that the seat is the proper distance from the pedals and steering wheel to avoid leaning forward or reaching.
- ✓ The headrest should support the middle of your head to keep it upright. Tilt the headrest forward if possible to make sure that the head-to-headrest distance is less than four inches.

When Getting Out of the Car:

- ✓ First, open the door completely. Then swing the legs out to the side and pivot on the buttocks so the entire body moves as a unit. Do not twist the low back. Place one hand on the seat and the other on the car frame. Scoot forward and place feet under the hips. Lean forward and push with one hand while pulling with the other. Use the leg muscles to come to a full standing position. ***To get in the car: sit first, and reverse the procedure.***

Lifting & Carrying

Basic Tips To Avoid Injury:

- ✓ Always bend at the knees, not at the waist.
- ✓ Always lift with your strong leg and stomach muscles, not the lower back. Be careful to bend at the knees not the waist.

- ✓ Use a supportive belt to help maintain good posture when lifting if recommended by your physiotherapist.
- ✓ The closer you can hold heavy and large objects to your centre of gravity (i.e. your chest) the safer you will be.
- ✓ If lifting with one arm, switch arms frequently.
- ✓ Keep your backpack or purse as light as possible. Be sure the load is balanced from right to left.
- ✓ When carrying a backpack, keep the shoulders and neck straight. Avoid rounding the shoulders. If the weight is too heavy, consider a rolling backpack with wheels.

The Mechanics Of Lifting:

- ✓ Test the load and be sure you can lift it safely before you lift. Get help if needed.
- ✓ Maintain a wide stance (i.e. base of support) to reduce the possibility of slipping.
- ✓ **Always lift with the legs or the large muscles to lessen the strain on back muscles.**
- ✓ Keep your back in its natural curve. Bend at the hips and knees. When the low back is erect, the forces are distributed evenly.
- ✓ Tighten stomach muscles when lifting to reduce the strain on the low back.
- ✓ Think before you lift. Plan your strategy: how you will lift the object? Where will you carry it? What if you need to stop mid-carry?

- ✓ Maintain good communication when lifting/carrying a large object with a partner(s) to reduce the likelihood of jerky or unexpected movements.
- ✓ Move obstacles out of the way before you start. Be sure the path is clear (no toys, tools, loose rugs etc) to reduce the risk of slipping and falling.
- ✓ Eliminate repetitive lifting tasks where possible. Place the items you use constantly at a better height so you don't need to lift them so often.
- ✓ **To Retrieve Items From a Low Shelf:** Avoid bending over and twisting. Instead, kneel or squat down in front of the shelf, pick up the item, hold it close to the body and use the strong leg muscles to come to a standing position with a straight back.

The Mechanics Of Carrying:

- ✓ When carrying things, like boxes or other items that can be held in your arms, hold the object close to your centre or gravity (i.e. chest/trunk).
- ✓ NO TWISTING! Use your feet to change direction. This significantly decreases the stress and load on the back.
- ✓ If carrying things like suitcases or handbags, observe the following rules:
 - ➔ Try to carry equal weight in both arms
 - ➔ To pick up the bags, keep your back straight and bend at the knees.
 - ➔ Again, do not twist while carrying the bags.
 - ➔ Lower bags by bending knees, not the back.

When Standing for a Long Period (brushing teeth, ironing, washing dishes, etc.):

- ✓ Avoid fatigue by breaking large duties into smaller ones that take less time.
- ✓ Use a high bar stool when you can to vary the position.
- ✓ Consider using an anti-fatigue mat so that the surface you are standing on has some “give”, and will put less pressure on the back.
- ✓ There are several things to remember when performing duties such as vacuuming, sweeping, shovelling, or raking. Stay close to the work area. Avoid twisting movements. Use your body weight to help you move.

Activities Above Chest Height:

- ✓ When doing activities that are above chest level such as washing windows, painting, changing light bulbs or hanging pictures, always use a stable step stool to ensure you are working at the proper level. An alternative is to use a long handled extender or brush.

Pushing & Pulling

- ✓ Remember: Always push when you can, it's easier and maximizes your weight advantage. Only pull when you have to.

The Mechanics Of Pushing:

- ✓ First, test the load to see how easy it is to push.

- ✓ Make sure the path is clear.
- ✓ Stand facing the object. Place your hands on the object. Place one leg behind the other. Bend the knees and keep the back straight. Tighten the abdominal muscles and slowly push with the arms and legs.
- ✓ Once moving, continue to push in a slow and steady manner. When ready to stop pushing, slowly ease up and return to standing position.

The Mechanics of Pulling:

- ✓ Remember to try to think of a way to push before pulling.
- ✓ If there is no choice, first, test the load to see how easy it is to pull. Make sure the path is clear.
- ✓ Stand facing the object, placing the hands on it. Place one leg behind the other. Bend the knees and keep the back straight. Tighten the abdominal muscles and slowly pull with the arms and legs. Once moving, continue to pull in a slow and steady manner.

Section 2

Types Of Lifts To Use

Types Of Lifts:

- ✓ Basic Squat Lift
- ✓ The Half Kneel Lift
- ✓ The Partial Golf Pickup
- ✓ The Full Golf Pickup
- ✓ The Overhead Lift
- ✓ The Standing Kneel Lift
- ✓ The 2 Person Lift

The following are examples of different lifting situations, which you may find yourself facing in everyday life:

Basic Squat Lift:

This lift is useful for something of moderate size and weight such as a laundry basket, a box of clothes, or a bag of groceries. Begin standing close to the object to be lifted. Squat down, keeping the back straight and firmly grasp the container. Pick the container up and hold it close to your body as you tighten your stomach muscles. Next stand up slowly and smoothly letting the large leg muscles do the work.

The Half Kneel lift:

This lift may be helpful with things that have an irregular shape or might shift when lifted. This might be things like a small fan, a small pet, or a small child. This lift can also be useful when lifting objects from a low shelf of table. Stand close to the object to be lifted. Squat down onto one knee. Keep the back straight, pick up the object, and slide up onto your thigh and then cradle the child or the object against the body. Tighten your stomach muscles and slowly stand, using the leg muscles.

The Partial Golf Pickup:

This is a good way to retrieve things out of a car trunk, grocery cart or washing machine. When lifting from a car trunk, prepare the object to be lifted by placing one leg on bumper, keeping your back straight and pivot at the hips while extending the opposite leg backwards. Grasp the object firmly, and slowly lift while straightening at the hips, pushing up with the other arm, and bringing the leg back down. Position the object close to the

The Full Golf Pickup:

This lift should only be done with objects that weigh only a pound or less. If you currently have a back injury, a weak back, had prior back surgery, tendency to have back pain or are pregnant, this lift should be avoided. Keeping the back straight, pivot at the hips, while extending one leg straight behind you as you reach down to pick up the object. As you pivot back up with the object, swing the straight leg back down.

The Overhead Lift:

This lift is used when lifting objects down from a high surface such as a shelf. If the object is higher than head level, use a sturdy step stool. Move up close to the shelf. Place one leg in front of the other. Shift weight slightly to the front leg. Reach up and firmly grasp the object in both hands while keeping

your back straight. Slowly lift the object off the shelf as you shift the weight back onto both feet evenly. Carefully lower object down to chest.

The Standing Kneel Lift:

This lift works well when moving objects from within a car such as a small child. Stand close to car seat. Keep your back straight. Kneel on the inside knee. Tighten your abdominal muscles and slowly grasp the child in your hands. Carefully bring the child close towards your chest. Stand up slowly.

The 2 Person Lift:

This is used when the object is either too heavy for one person or is too large, bulky or cumbersome for one person. This may be a table, a large box or a mattress. If the object cannot be held close to your body, get help. Both people stand on either side of the object as close as possible. Communicate between each other as to who will count for the lift and which direction you will go. The lift performed is the squat lift. Squat down, keeping the backs straight and firmly grasp the object. The lead person gives a 1-2-3 count and both people lift on the 3 count by tightening abdominal muscles and slowly straightening legs.

Bonus Section!

7 More Tips To Keep You Moving!

✓ Build movement into your life!

If you are injured, getting moving again often starts with a visit to your trusted physiotherapist. Who is trained to identify faulty movement patterns and to teach you correct ones. A physiotherapist will ensure that the exercises you do are the best ones for your unique injury/situation.

A daily ritual of back exercise routines will keep the spine supple, strong and healthy. If you build exercise routines into your life, you will benefit from your 40's into your 60's and beyond.

✓ Wear proper footwear.

High heels increase the pressure on your knees and spine. The stress of improper footwear has a cumulative effect. The pressure builds up over months and years and begins to make it's presence known via back pain. Proper footwear reduces this pressure and the associated stress on knees, spine, shoulders, and neck.

✓ Fit regular toning exercise into your day.

Yoga, pilates, and weight-bearing exercise all have their place in building and supporting a healthy spine.

Pilates: is a series of exercises designed to improve muscle tone and control. With Pilates, the benefit comes from developing muscle control. Working with a certified pilates teacher is highly recommended.

Yoga: is well-known for developing flexibility and strength in postural muscles. Yoga is one way to reverse or slow down the stiffness that creeps into our joints with ageing. It is important to work with a certified yoga teacher that understands the limitations of your body.

Weight Bearing Exercise: includes a wide range of activities from walking to going to the gym, playing golf and dancing. All are good to keep you moving. If loss of flexibility and muscle control are concerns, working with a physiotherapist, personal trainer or adding yoga and pilates are great ways to manage pain and strengthen your body.

✓ Stay hydrated.

Your body is approximately 75% water and you need to replenish that water daily. Excessive coffee, tea and alcohol have a diuretic effect on the body and may leave you dehydrated. Dehydration may lead to dizziness, fatigue and muscle pains and cramps. Be sure to drink the equivalent of 8 cups (i.e. 2L) of water each day.

✓ Check your mattress.

Although mentioned earlier, this one creeps up on us. Many mattresses have a lifespan of 5-10 years. If you have back pain, check when you bought your last mattress. It may be time for an upgrade.

✓ Avoid sitting for long periods.

Many of us work desk jobs and over time all, that sitting really catches up with us. Every 20 minutes or so, get up and stretch, go for a glass of water. Look out the window. Upgrade to a standing/sitting desk if that is possible. Work in a few yoga stretches to work out the kinks. Take the stairs not the elevator every chance you get. We can't change our work; but we can manage the way we use our bodies with a change in attitude and a few tweaks of the routing.