

April 2019 Back Safety

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Welcome to this month's edition of Live Well, Work Well. In this issue we will be focusing on the importance of Back Safety.

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Don't Get Bent Out Of Shape

If you're bent on maintaining a healthier back, following these common sense work habits can help keep injury away.

- When sitting, keep your upper back and neck comfortably straight with your back firmly against the chair.
- Make sure your chair is right for you — adjust the height, tilt, armrests and backrest.
- Take a 30 second timeout every 15 minutes or so to stretch, move or relax.
- Try standing up when you answer the phone, to stretch and change positions.
- Limit the time you spend carrying heavy briefcases, purses and bags.
- Consider increasing the amount of exercise you get to help improve your physical condition.

Don't Let Back Pain Get You Down

Back pain is one of the most common health problems. Stopping back pain from starting is easier than treating it. Here are a few tips to help make your back stronger and lower your chances of having back pain:

- Build up your back with strengthening and stretching workouts.
- Be aware of your posture. Stand and sit up straight.
- Stay active.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Carrying too many pounds adds stress to your back.
- If you carry a backpack, laptop bag or briefcase, make sure that it is not too heavy.



Sources: North American Spine Society

Think Before You Lift



When you put your mind to it, you can avoid back injury when you follow these simple lifting techniques.

Lifting is strenuous – and your back will let you know if you've done it incorrectly. To avoid back pain and injury, think about these approaches before you lift:

- Get as close to the load as possible — as if you're hugging the object.

- Keep yourself in an upright position while squatting to pick up the object.

- Tighten your stomach muscles to help support your spine.

- Use your legs, the strongest muscles in your body.

- Turn with your feet, not twisting your back.

Back Safety



TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR BACK

Prevention Beats Treatment to Protect Your Back

Back pain is one of the most common health problems. Stopping back pain from starting is easier than treating it. Here are a few tips to help make your back stronger and lower your chances of having back pain:

- Build up your back with strengthening and stretching work-outs.
- Stay active.
- Be aware of your posture. Stand and sit up straight.
- Try not to do a lot of heavy lifting. When you do have to lift something, lift with your legs, not your back.
- Watch your weight. Carrying too many pounds adds stress to your back.
- Get plenty of calcium and vitamin D.
- Do not wear high heels. Make sure your shoes are well cushioned.
- Try not to stand for long periods of time.
- Make sure that if you carry a backpack, laptop bag or briefcase, that it is not too heavy. The same goes for your children's school back packs.
- To lower your chances of back pain, try to quit smoking if you smoke. If you're a non-smoker, stay that way. Smokers are more likely to have back problems. Nicotine restricts the blood flow to discs in your spine which means your back ages faster. Smoking also lowers calcium absorption by bones resulting in twice the number of fractures for smokers.

Care For Your Back

Easy does it with back pain

It's a widely-held, mistaken belief that you need to rest and avoid activity for a long time if you have back pain. Long-term bed rest is in fact not recommended. Staying in bed more than a day or two can make back pain worse. Here are a few tips to consider if you have back pain:

- Stop activity only for a few days.
- Apply ice or heat to the area. Ice for the first 48 to 72 hours. Apply heat after that.
- Take over-the-counter pain medicine.
- Do not do any heavy lifting or twisting for the first six weeks after pain begins.
- After two to three weeks you can start regular activities including exercise. Always check with your doctor before beginning any program of physical activity.

Back injuries can happen at work, around the house or in the garden. In fact, 8 out of 10 people will have back pain at some time in their lives.



Sources: National Institute of Health; North American 55717.0115 Spine Society

Put Your Best Foot Forward

How to protect your back when lifting

Occupations such as construction, factory work or other physical types of jobs can place significant demands on your back. Exerting too much force on your back may cause injury. If your job is physical in nature, you might face injury if you frequently lift or move heavy objects. The good news is that you can avoid back pain and injuries by paying attention to what causes them and focusing on prevention. Here are safeguards to keep in mind when you lift:

Start in the best position:

Think through your task first, before lifting. Decide where you'll place the load and how you'll get there. Remember not to bend your waist or lock your legs. Instead, plant your feet firmly on the ground, standing as close to the load as possible. Kneel down, resting one knee on the ground. Lift the object from between your legs and hold it close to your body.

Have a leg to stand on: Your leg muscles are some of the strongest muscles in your body — use them to lift the load. Keep your back as straight as possible and tighten your abdominal muscles to help support your spine.

Keep the load close at hand: When you are standing and ready to move, hold the load close to your body. This will reduce the strain on your lower back. Avoid turning or twisting while holding the load. Turn by pivoting your feet, not your back. Also, avoid lifting heavy loads above your waist.

Always ask for help if an object is too heavy and use equipment or tools to assist when available. And next time you get ready to pick up a load, give your back the lift it deserves with these practical, back-saving ideas.



Sources: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research; National Institutes of Health



Stay Ahead Of The Curve For A Healthy Back

Your back is formed with three natural curves in an S-shape. When these curves are aligned properly, your ears, shoulders and hips are in a straight line. Without support from strong, flexible muscles, your back loses its three natural curves. Poor posture can lead to pain and serious injury.

Aerobic exercise, combined with healthy eating and maintaining your ideal weight, can help build the muscles that support your back and eliminate any unnecessary strain. Think about making some new lifestyle choices today to help maintain your curves for a healthier, pain-free back.

Sources: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research; National Institutes of Health

Did You Know?

Understanding Health Care Costs and Quality

Most health insurance plans offer you resources, tools and even savings on retail items. For example, as a member, you may get perks to help you save time and money, lose weight, quit smoking and even get discounts at retail stores. Here you'll find some helpful tips for making your health insurance plan work for you.

Making the Most of Your Medical Benefits

Medical benefits are most likely the number one reason you chose to get health insurance. Here are a few simple things you can do to get the most out of your benefits.

- **Stay in the network.** Most health plans have negotiated discounts with doctors, hospitals and other health care experts who are in their network. That often means lower out-of-pocket costs to you.
- **Use the ER for emergencies only.** Real emergencies call for a trip to the closest Emergency Room (ER). But you can usually save money on your copayment by going to your primary care doctor for colds, minor sprains and other less serious health issues.
- **Follow your doctor's orders.** Be sure to take any medications, treatments or therapies your doctor suggests. That way you can get better quickly and avoid extra costs.
- **Use generic drugs.** Generic drugs cost less than brand name drugs and offer you the lowest available copay. Generic drugs have the same ingredients and work the same as their brand-name equivalents.
- **Use freestanding medical service facilities.** You can usually lower medical costs by scheduling lab work, imaging and other outpatient services at freestanding medical service facilities instead of a full-service or general acute care hospital.
- **Know your coverage.** Make sure services or treatments are covered before you plan your next doctor's visit. Knowing this ahead of time can save you money.
- **Do an "annual check-up" of your health insurance plan.** Make sure your plan still meets your needs. This is even more important if you had any major life-changing events in the past year, such as marriage, the birth of a child or the removal of a dependent from your health insurance policy.

Use Your Member Perks

Most health insurance plans offer useful tools and conveniences to their members. To get the most out of your plan, take full advantage of these perks:

- **Get online.** We offer a secure website (Blue Access for Members) where you can check the status of claims, view benefits information, find a doctor and much more.
- **Take advantage of programs.** If your plan has free health screenings or wellness programs, use them to better your health. For example, some have programs to help you lose weight and quit smoking with no extra cost to members.
- **Learn how to be healthy.** We have information to help keep you and your family healthy. Sign up for newsletters, read articles online, or have health and wellness tips.



BlueCross BlueShield
of Texas

Let's Get Moving!



30 day BODYWEIGHT CHALLENGE

ARMS	LEGS	BACK	ABS	TOTAL BODY
1 WIDE-GRIP PUSH-UP	2 SURRENDER SQUAT	3 SUPERMAN - LATERAL RAISE	4 SINGLE LEG V-UP	5 SWITCH JUMP
6 FOREARM CROSSOVER PUSH-UP	7 LUNGE KICK	8 BENT-OVER REVERSE FLY	9 FLUTTER KICKS	10 SQUAT-JUMP-PUNCH
11 SINGLE-ARM PUSH-UP	12 ISOMETRIC SQUAT	13 REVERSE PLANK-UP	14 SIDE PLANK WITH A TWIST	15 BURPEE
16 TRICEPS PUSH-UP	17 AROUND-THE-WORLD LUNGE	18 AIR PULL-UP	19 BODY SAW	20 RUN AND SPRAWL
21 PUSH-UP PRESS	22 GODDESS SQUAT JUMP	23 PLANK BIRD DOG	24 SIDE-TO-SIDE CRUNCH	25 SURFIES
26 CROUCHING TIGER PUSH-UP	27 SIDE-LUNGE TO TUCK JUMP	28 GOOD MORNING	29 FOREARM SPIDER PLANK	30 SINGLE-LEG BURPEE

SHAPE #BODYWEIGHT CHALLENGE

Last Month's Events:

Health and Wellness Seminar "Healthy Eating"



Upcoming Events:

Health and Wellness Seminar

Topic: "Back Safety"

Date: Thursday, April 25, 2019

Time: 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.)

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

Door Prize Winners:

- Jaime Cervantes – 3 Schlitterbahn Tickets
- Delilah Gonzalez – 3 Schlitterbahn Tickets