Healthy Back—Healthy IU
Week Three
The Problem with Everyday Activities

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The Problem with Everyday Activities

• Given that approximately 85% of back pain is muscular in nature, it’s imperative to ask:

“Am I doing something throughout the day that inadvertently causes back pain?”
The Problem with Everyday Activities

If you’re a human who:
- sits
- stands
- sleeps
- lifts
- exercises

The answer is probably **YES**!
Let’s look at sitting

Get off your tailbone!

How not to sit!

Figure 4.12. Two positions of the pelvis during sitting. Sitting posture essentially depends on the relationship of the body’s center of gravity to the ischia. Left, it is far posterior; right, it is well balanced over the ischial prominences.
Options for Healthy Sitting

(NOTE: in all these examples, the person is maintaining a neutral spine. Try it yourself!)

(NOTE: the IU Environmental Health & Safety department does not support the use of some of these examples on the IU campus)

- Perch sitting
- Kneeling chair
- Stability ball chair
- Elevate the back of the sitting bones
Tools to Help You Do the Right Thing

Try a lumbar support!
NOTE: The IU EHS department recommends a properly fitted chair instead of a lumbar support.

Back cushion

OPTP Pinky ball

Best Lumbar Support Pillows Reviews

Wedge cushion
The Spinal Column:

Maintain a Neutral Spine throughout daily activities:

A neutral spine has 4 curves, each in an “ideal” relationship to the other curves
Let’s look at standing posture

Common problems:
- Forward head
- Excessive kyphosis

(also sometimes called a dowager’s hump or a buffalo hump)
Let’s look at standing posture

Common problems:

Scoliosis

Excessive Lordosis
Exercises to help correct poor posture

Tuck chin in; press shoulder blades against wall; tighten abdominals

It’s easier to maintain a neutral spine during prolonged standing if one foot is elevated—recommended by some, but not all healthcare practitioners

Wall slide

Chin tuck

Help correct excessive kyphosis
Bending over, Lifting

One hand on thigh—good!

Ouch!

Ouch!

Poor spinal alignment; Longer club would help

Careful!
**LIFTING DO’S & DON’TS**

**DO LIFT AS A TEAM**  
Do lift bulky or heavy loads as a team. Doing so is smart and the safe way to work.

**DO TURN WITH LEGS**  
Do move your legs and feet when turning or lowering the load. Avoid twisting at your waist.

**DO USE YOUR LEGS**  
Do lift the load using your powerful leg and buttocks muscles. Your feet should be wide apart, head and back upright. Keep abdominal muscles tight and the load in close.

**DO USE EQUIPMENT**  
Do use equipment like hand trucks, dolly’s, or forklifts to do the heavy lifting. It’s much less work and less risk of injury.

**DON’T LIFT BULKY LOADS ALONE**  
Don’t lift bulky or heavy loads alone. Doing so puts great stress on your low back muscles and spine.

**DON’T TWIST WHEN LIFTING**  
Don’t twist when lifting, lowering, or carrying any load as this increases your risk of back injury.

**DON’T USE YOUR BACK**  
Don’t lift the load with your rear end high and your lead low. Use your leg muscles, not your weaker low back muscles.

**DON’T LIFT HEAVY LOADS**  
Don’t lift heavy loads when you can use equipment. It is less work and less stress on your low back.
How to shovel snow properly:

- **Back straight**
- **Bending at hips**
- **Wide stance**
- **Feet facing shovel**

Incorrect posture:

- The back curved & twisted
- Hips not bent
- Knee is straight
Practice hinging from your hips, not your waist! (The goal is to maintain neutral spine)
Sleeping

Side sleeping is generally best. Pillows can help you stay in neutral alignment.

If you must sleep on your back, place a pillow under your knees to help maintain neutral all night long.
Problematic Fitness Exercises

Double leg raises/flutter kicks/scissors

Bilateral row with poor form

Dead lift with poor form

Windmills

Full sit-up
Exercises to Practice:
Keep your spine in neutral!

- Perfect seated alignment
- Assisted squat
- Mountain pose
- Hip hinging
- Supported one-arm lift

Perfect posture against a wall
Make a Plan!

This week I will __________________________

Examples:

1) For the next 5 days, every time I sit down to eat I will consciously sit tall for the first 5 minutes.

2) This week, every time I bend over to pick something off the floor, I will put one hand on my thigh for support.

3) For the next week, on M/W/F, I will do 12 assisted squats at _____ (pick a time).
• Stay mindful and self-aware.
• You can retrain your body to do the right thing and reduce your risk of back pain!

Good Luck!
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Your Workplace Wellness Program

MOVE MORE...SIT LESS...FEEL GREAT!