



Anthony Pribila, PT, CMP, CEAS, Clinic Director

"Specializing in solutions to clinical and industrial rehab challenges"

Therapeutic Rehab Specialists

20 Steps to Preventing and Managing Back Pain

Back injuries cost you and your employer time and money. Many hours at home, work and play may be lost due to the effects of back pain. Of the more than two million injuries incurred on the job per year, 30% are back injuries. For every back injury that happens on the job, over two times that amount happens at home, or at play. It is estimated that eight out of ten Americans will have a back injury sometime in their lives.

Protecting your back around the clock is your best insurance against sustaining a back injury. This protection can be accomplished through proper exercise by targeting the various muscles of the back, abdomen and thighs. Maintaining proper flexibility is equally important. While working at making these muscles flexible and strong, individuals need to practice correct postural techniques and body mechanics.

THERAPEUTIC REHAB SPECIALISTS of Tampa specializes in treating neck and back injuries. In addition to treating your injuries we will teach you self treatment techniques along with postural and body mechanic instruction.

We look forward to assisting you and your physician in reaching all of your rehabilitation goals.

Physical Therapy • Comprehensive Neck/Back Evaluation & Rehabilitation • Pre/Post Offer Screening
Musculoskeletal Pain (Bones, Joints, Muscles, Ligaments) • Sports related injuries • Work Conditioning •
Physical Performance Evaluation • Functional Capacity Assessments (FCA) • Ergonomic Assessment

11928 Sheldon Rd..•Suite #105 • Tampa, FL 33626• (813) 876-8771

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1. Practice sitting up straight in your chair and avoid slouching. Your back should be either straight or slightly arched, and you should be sitting all the way back in your chair. Try using a lumbar roll or sit on a folded pillow to help reduce back discomfort. Feet should be flat on the floor and your hips should be higher than your knees. Your arms should be flexed to 90 degrees in this position. An angled desk or a three ring binder can be used to write on to help improve posture and reduce neck pain. When driving, your car seat should be close enough so you're not stretching to reach the pedals.
2. When in acute pain avoid activities requiring you to bend forward. You may be able to maintain a straight back by kneeling or bending down on one knee while doing activities such as vacuuming, cleaning or lifting small objects. Before lifting, always clear a path of travel and test the load prior to lifting. Lift everything twice; first mentally then physically.
3. When lifting, **always** use correct technique: keep your head up, back straight, keep your stomach tight while drawing your belly button up and in, legs apart, bend at the knees, and keep the object close to you while maintaining a secure grip. Rise in a steady manner and DO NOT twist; instead walk the object around with your feet. Push rather than pull when given the option.
4. When coughing or sneezing, stand up straight and brace yourself to avoid any sudden thrusting of your body forward.
5. When lying down use a firm mattress. A piece of plywood can be placed between the mattress and box spring to help make the mattress firmer. Use a pillow with good support for your neck. Avoid too many pillows under your head to prevent a forward flexed position of the head which may lead to a straining of the neck. Sleeping on your stomach may also provoke neck pain. When lying on your back try using a pillow or two under your knees, or one between your legs when sleeping on your side.
6. When transferring from a lying to a sitting position log roll to your side, bend your knees, drop your legs over the side of the bed, and rise up using your elbow and hand.
7. When working in a prolonged forward flexed position or sitting in a car for a long period of time, you should take a break and stand up at regular intervals. You can try extending backwards five to ten times and walk around for a few minutes before resuming your drive.
8. Wear comfortable, non-slip shoes when walking. High heels may lead to an increase in low back pain.
9. When sitting or standing for long periods of time, try switching positions frequently or alternate positions when standing on a small stool with one foot.
10. If you have an office job and sit in a swivel chair; turn yourself using your feet rather than your trunk.

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11. Reducing stress will decrease the amount of muscular tension that may build up in the neck and back.
12. Weight loss is important in reducing excessive forces on the spine. Weak abdominals cause the stomach to stick out and results in an arching of the back increasing forces on the spine. This makes maintenance of good posture more difficult. The head sometimes follows this route which may lead to neck pain as well.
13. Know your limitations. If a load is too heavy or bulky, get help. If no one else is around to help, arrange for mechanical help from a push cart, hand truck or fork lift. You can also split the load up into several packages. A moment of precaution can save you from days to weeks of disability from an injury.
14. Make sure the object your lifting is in a stable and safe container. Be sure your floor and pathway are safe and clear. A broken step, cluttered or wet floor can lead to a serious injury.
15. Lifting is easiest at waist height. When lifting or working on your feet use a table or bench under your working area to decrease the amount of bending or lifting you need to do. This can also be done by washing dishes in a bowl on a countertop rather than in a deep sink.
16. While exercise is an important a key to preventing or managing low back pain, training the core trunk stabilizer muscles to contract prior to engaging in lifting and carrying activity is crucial in preventing back pain.
17. Work with your company, physical therapist, risk manager, and co-workers to make your work environment a safer place.
18. Severe or persistent back pain should be brought to the attention of your physician. Back pain can also be related to a birth defect such as scoliosis, medical conditions such as prostate, kidney or gynecological problems, arthritis, emotional problems, sprains/strains, poor posture, and disc disorders.
19. Walking and pool exercises are excellent activities to keep you fit. When you are in water up to your waist, up to 50% of your bodyweight is decreased; in water up to your neck 90% of your bodyweight is decreased. Aquatic therapy is excellent exercise for chronic back pain sufferers.
20. Using a lumbar support belt for heavy lifting activity can help reduce instances of back pain by keeping a tight base of support around the mid section and decreasing disc pressure on the lumbar spine.

Note: If you have a history of back problems or had previous back or neck surgery, seek medical advice first as some recommendations may not be beneficial to all individuals. If you have pain or discomfort with any of the previous recommendations, discontinue immediately and consult your physician or physical therapist.