

How to Avoid Getting a Back Problem

- The vast majority of back problems occur because of loss of the correct curvatures in the spine.
- The spine is designed to be curved forwards in the neck and low back with a curve backwards in the middle of the spine.
- When the curves are maintained weight is distributed through the bones and strongest ligaments. When the curves are too great or too small the weight falls on the weaker ligaments, the weak parts of the discs, and the small joints of the spine.
- Most people need to remember only two ways of lifting:
 - A power lift for heavier weights
 - A light lift for those every day things like pieces of paper

With a power lift the aim is to maintain the natural curve in the low back.

To do this:

- Bend your knees
 - Hold the weight close
 - Tighten your stomach muscles
 - Hold the curve in the low back
 - Lift your head first
- For light weights the "golfers lift" allows the back to remain straight as you pivot about your hip. While holding onto a solid object for support bend the hips while lifting one leg behind you. This lift is only appropriate for light objects which can be lifted with one hand.



- Lifting correctly is absolutely worthless, however, if you spend most of your day sitting and standing incorrectly, poor sitting and standing postures amount for more than 80% of back problems.
- To maintain a good standing posture, keep your head up and shoulders back (just like mom always said). Keeping a good head and neck posture automatically improves your back posture.
- To maintain a good sitting posture, place a padded roll between your low back and the chair. A good low back posture automatically produces a better head and neck posture.



- The final and most important point is stretching your back. We spend too much of our time with our backs "flexed". That is, bent forwards as in slumped sitting, or stooping.
- The strain of the flexed position can be overcome simply by arching your back regularly through the day.
- Standing with hands on hips, push your hips forwards and your shoulders back, hold the position for two to three seconds.



- If you repeat this movement every hour through the day, every day, you will reduce your chances of a back problem by over 50%.

By PAUL GOODYER, MCPA, MCSP, DIP.PT
 Brockville Physiotherapy & Sports Injuries Clinic
 Sports and Industrial Rehabilitation