Flexible hamstring muscles: are necessary to prevent excessive tilting backwards of the pelvis, especially when sitting and bending. Tight hamstrings can lead to loss of the normal lumbar lordosis curve in the lower back which prevents adverse stress forces acting on the discs. Perform this exercise twice for each leg, holding the stretch for at least 15 seconds. *However, do not do this exercise if you suffer with sciatica.*

Functional core abdominal muscles: especially the deepest layer or Transversus muscles help support the vertebrae and discs by helping prevent shearing forces. **Pilates** style exercises can be a great way of promoting spinal flexibility and core strength.

For more detailed information and advice on back pain, the exercises in this leaflet and other injury and fitness tips visit our website **www.injuryfitpro.com** and YouTube channel, where you will find:

Blogs & Self Help Guides: featuring many subjects from sciatica to advice on gardening with back pain.

Spinal Mobility: is an important function to maintain in order to promote circulation to the discs, muscles and joints and to prevent injury due to mobility imbalances at different segments of the spine. When performed correctly the exercise illustrated below will help preserve the health of your spinal tissues and even out movement imbalances.

From all fours, (middle picture), slowly tilt the pelvis backwards and lift the head up forming an exaggerated arch in your lower back (top picture). Don't go as far as you can just aim for around 75% of the available movement and stop short of any discomfort. Pause for a split second then slowly tilt the other way, dropping the head down and doming the spine, again aim for around 75% of full range, this should be an articulation exercises, not a stretching or flexibility exercise. Repeat these movements one way then the other until you have complete 5 -10 movements in each direction.

For a full explanation of these exercises and many more like it, search for the Injury Fit Pro, core exercise program,

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LOOKING AFTER YOUR BACK

In total there are 34 individual segments or vertebrae in the human adult spine. Flexibility and gentle repetitive movement of each vertebra is important to maintain health and circulation to its surrounding tissues such as the spinal muscles, ligaments, joints, disc and nerves. Simple activities such as walking is a great way of keeping your spine strong and healthy.

Correct posture when resting and lifting is also important to prevent excessive wear and tear. The low back or lumbar spine should have a slight curve inwards or lordosis. Excessive curving in of the low back may lead to strain on the facet joints whereas excessive or prolonged rounding forward postures in the low back can lead to strain accumulating in the discs, this may lead to disc protrusions (slipped discs) pressing on the adjacent nerve leading to the leg (one of the causes of sciatica).

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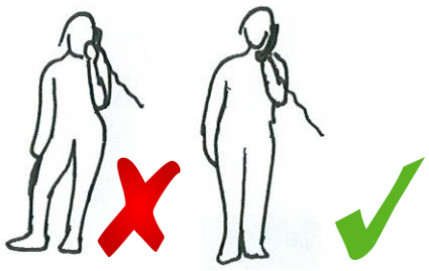
Low back Do's and Don't's!

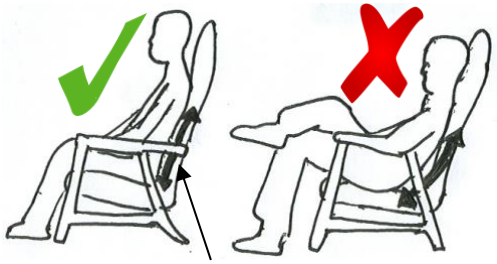
Standing



Do not stand with all your weight on one leg. It will put an uneven strain on your spine. Stand tall with weight shared equally through both legs.

Sitting

Whether at the office in chairs and or on the sofa try to avoid chairs that make your lower back slouch or rounded forwards. If the seat of your armchair or sofa is too soft a piece of wood underneath the cushion as well as a firm support in you lower back may help.

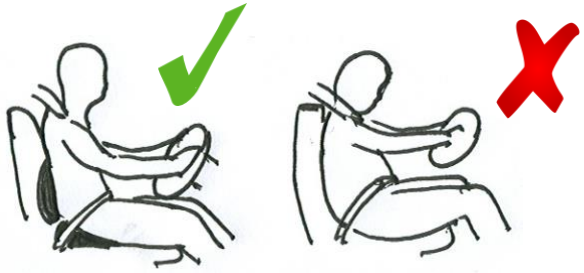


Lumbar support maintaining lumbar lordosis

Bottom and knees level
Firm support in lower back

Don't sit in a chair which allows your bottom to sink lower than your knees. Avoid slouching with you lower back.

Driving

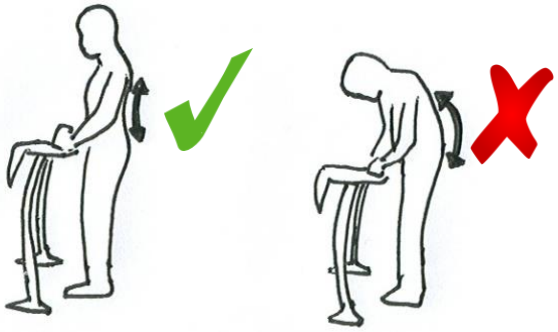


Knees level with bottom, lower back supported.

Avoid leaning forward for prolonged periods when in a seated position such as driving or at the office chair.

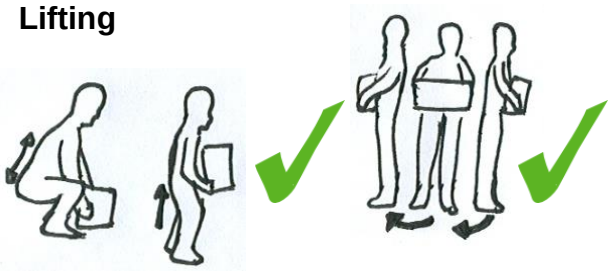
Around the house

Try preventing allowing your back to curve forwards for prolonged periods. When performing activities such as ironing, whenever possible, try to keep the work surfaces high enough so your back is straight.

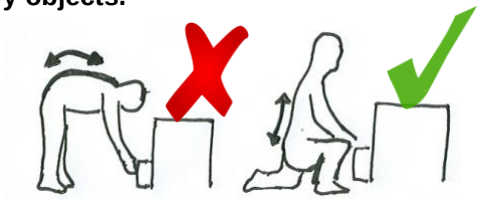


If you do have to work in a cramped position so that your back is bent forward try standing up frequently and gently arch your back backwards slightly 5 or 6 times.

Lifting

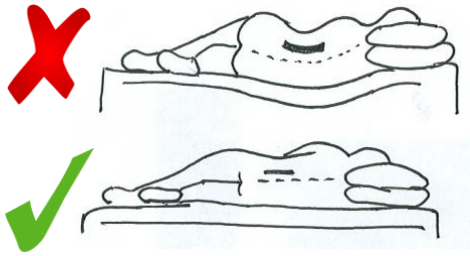


When lifting try to maintain the natural lordosis (slight curve inwards) of your back. If you must turn, do so by shuffling your feet, moving your whole body round, **never twist your back when lifting heavy objects.**



When bending down to low levels do not spend long periods with your lower back rounded forwards.

Sleeping



The key to a good bed is one which allows your spine to be kept in a straight alignment. If a bed is too soft it will cause your spine to sag (as illustrated above). If a mattress is too hard it will not have enough give to be able to contour to the body's curves. When choosing a new bed it is worth spending some time trying the bed in the shop, ask a friend or relative to look at your back whilst you are lying down to see if your back looks straight

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Available from Amazon and to download at www.injuryfitpro.com

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