

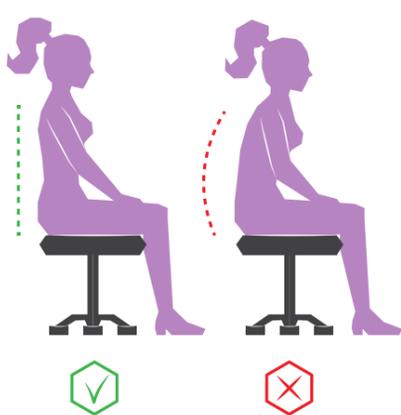
How to PROTECT Your Lower Back

There are several things you can do to prevent low back pain. Here are a few to get you started.

Watch your posture

Good posture means standing up straight and not slouching or leaning forward. Having good posture can help prevent back pain and also helps you breathe right and support a strong body. Here are some tips for improving your posture:

- Do not slouch when standing or sitting. Your lower back supports your weight better when your back is straight.
- When standing, keep your weight balanced evenly on both of your feet.

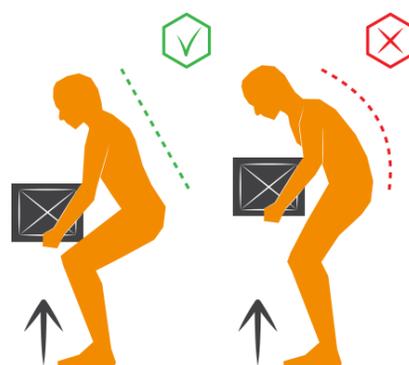


- Sit in a chair that supports your lower back and that's the right height for the work you do. Switch your sitting position or walk around the office periodically to relieve pressure on your lower back.

- Have good sleep form. Sleep on your side with your knees drawn up towards your stomach (the fetal position). This can help open up the joints in your spine and relieve pressure on your lower back. Always sleep on a firm surface.



- Be careful when lifting heavy items. When you lift something, bend your knees, pull your stomach muscles in, and keep your head down and in line with a straight back. Keep the object close to your body and don't twist.



Eat healthy foods

Excess weight around your waist can put a strain on the muscles in your lower back. Eating healthy foods can help you:

- Lose weight if you're overweight or maintain your weight if it's at a healthy level.
- Provide your body with vitamins and minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D, to help keep your spine and bones strong.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about the kinds of foods you should eat.



Get regular exercise

Exercise is important for your overall physical fitness and may be helpful in preventing low back pain.

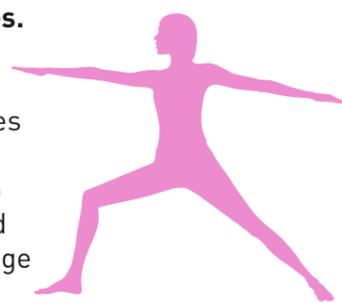
- Try exercises that can strengthen and stretch your muscles and improve your flexibility, such as walking, swimming, or yoga.
- If you have acute low back pain, you should stop your normal physical activity for the first few days to help relieve pain. After that, you can slowly ease into your normal activity.
- Remember to always talk with your healthcare provider before starting a new exercise plan.

The following exercises can help strengthen and stretch your back:

- **Flexion exercises.** These exercises involve bending forward. This may help reduce pressure on your nerves, stretch your back and hip muscles, and strengthen your abdominal muscles.



- **Stretching exercises.** Stretching can help improve the ability of the body's muscles to move, bend, and twist. This may help reduce stiffness and give you a wider range of motion.



- **Extension exercises.** With these exercises, you bend backward. This may help reduce the kind of pain that spreads to different parts of your body. Examples of extension exercises include leg lifts and raising your upper body.



- **Aerobic exercises.** These exercises increase your heart rate for a relatively long period of time (for example, 30 minutes). They include brisk walking, jogging, and swimming. Those who are experiencing low back pain should try to avoid high-impact exercises.