

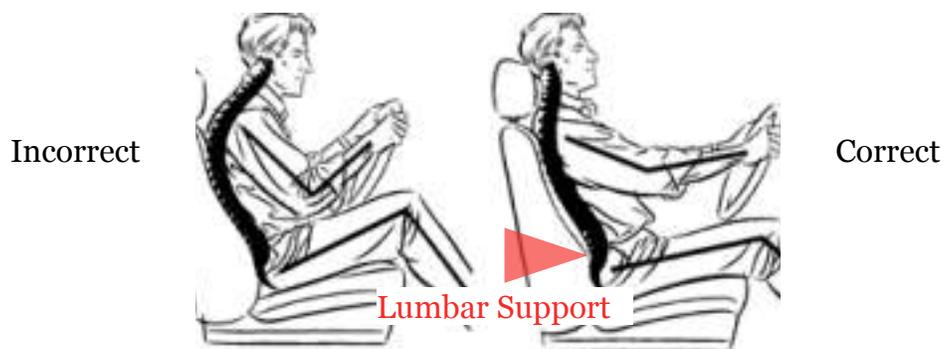
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# The Top 10 Daily Causes of Back Pain

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I have given this list to thousands of patients over the past 10 years. Some of them had acute back pain and others suffered with chronic pain for years. While lists can often be overwhelming, I suggest working on 1 aspect everyday and finish the list within 10 days. Many of my patients begin showing improvement within 1 week.—Dr. Bob Mason

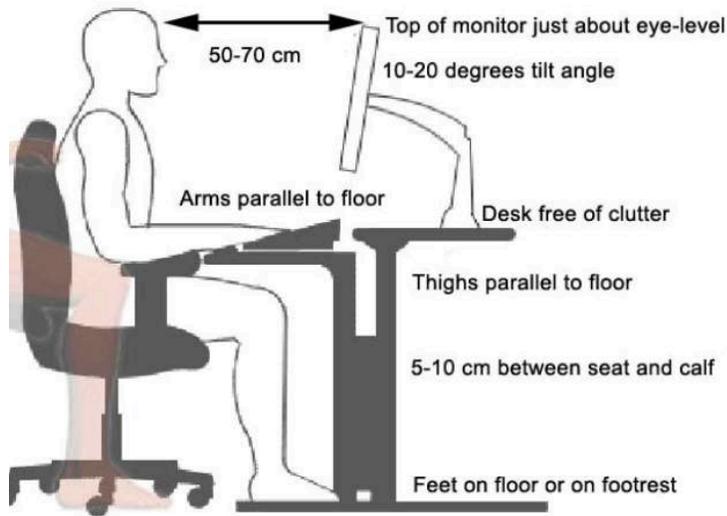
1. Posture while traveling—The diagram below shows how your posture should look while you are sitting in a car. The spine has 3 natural curves that keep you upright. The best way to maintain these 3 curves is by sitting straight up and down. Try increasing the lumbar support (if possible) to its fullest position, and if this is not a feature on your car, roll up a small towel and place it behind your low back. Make sure your head is always resting against the headrest.



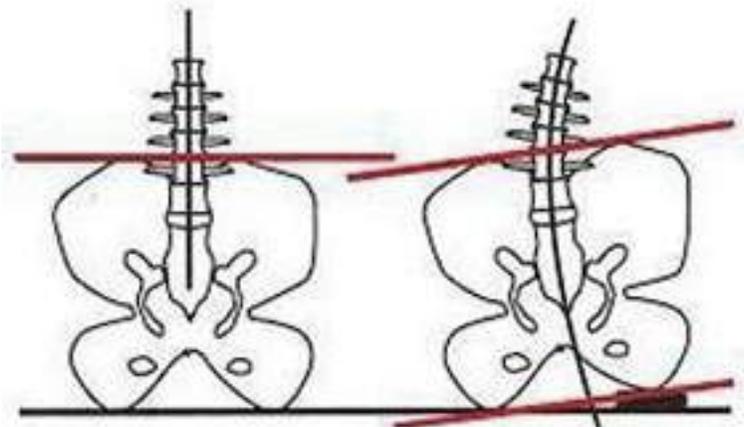
NO

YES

2. Computer Posture—Similar to car posture, keeping an erect position holds the alignment and releases pressure from your spinal cord, intervertebral discs and allows muscles to relax. Make sure your knees, ankles, hips and elbows are at a 90 degree angle.



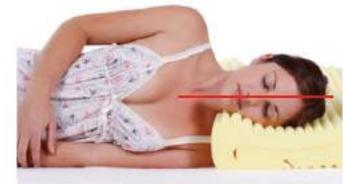
3. Do not place your wallet in your back pocket while sitting. This will create an uneven alignment of your hips and spine. As you can see, most back problems are a result of improper alignment.



4. Sleep Positions-Sleep on your back or side, but NEVER on your stomach! When your low back pain is acute, place a pillow under your knees while on your back or in between your legs when you are laying on your side. If you have trouble staying off your stomach, try wrapping your arms and legs around a body pillow (in a hugging motion) while you are on your side. Follow the diagrams below to see how your spine alignment should look while on your back and side. Just think, if you sit correctly at a computer but sleep incorrectly for 8 hours/night, you are still creating mis-alignment problems!



BAD PILLOW POSTURE



GOOD PILLOW POSTURE

5. Bending and Twisting simultaneously-Most people have heard the phrase “lift with your legs” which means don’t bend forward at the waist in an attempt to save the strain on your low back. While this is good advice, most low back problems arise when you **bend and twist at the same time**. (This is why many golfers have back pain— the golf swing requires you to bend and twist.)



Twisting



Bending



Bending+Twisting

These 2 movements combined place unequal pressure on the intervertebral discs (the shock absorber in between your vertebrae).

If your discs are already in bad shape, the bending and twisting motion will be the “straw that breaks the camel’s back” and cause immediate back pain.

In 10 years of practice, I’ve seen a handful of people hurt their back lifting heavy objects (like a piano). More commonly are back strains due to household chores. This is because most people bend and twist all day and don’t realize the movement is bad until the day that it begins to hurt.

Think of movements like transferring laundry from the washing machine to the dryer, or using a vacuum, sweeping, picking up children, picking up children’s toys, taking out trash, using a weed eater, picking weeds out of a flower bed, etc. All of these movements require a bend/twist movement that places strain on your back.

**So what’s the solution?** While you can’t avoid these daily activities, being aware of this movement can alter how you do some of them. (Some are harder than others) For example, when I take laundry from the washer and put it in the dryer, rather than moving each article of clothing 1 at a time which makes me bend and twist over and over, I take all of the laundry out and place it in a basket and then take the basket to the dryer

and transfer it all at once. Changing some of your daily movements reduces the amount of stress that your back faces so that when you are forced to bend/twist, such as quickly grabbing a toddler that is running toward a flight of stairs, your back will hold up.

6. “Text Neck”-This is from the overuse of smartphones that require you to always look down. Try to take breaks or use a computer instead.



7. Old Shoes-Improper shoes are one of the most overlooked aspects of low back pain (and knee pain). Be aware of worn out tread on your shoes which can alter the way you walk and lead to unequal back pressure. Charlotte Running Company and Omega Sports give great advice on which shoes you need based on your build and gait. If you have shoe inserts that are older than a few years, you might want to be re-evaluated to make sure that they are still applicable for your gait.

8. Purse, briefcase or backpack-Carrying these on one side can alter your spine angle. Try alternating sides or switching to a bag with 2 straps.

Backpacks should be high on your back to keep an upright posture.



Incorrect

9. Luggage-Use a suitcase that has 4 wheels instead of 2 and again be aware of the bending/twisting motion when lifting your suitcase.



10. Stress-Most people agree that stress affects your emotions, but having tense muscles, due to stress, also means having muscles that are fatigued and overused! Take time to slow down, deal with problems and have fun!

and now...

### The BEST 3 Stretches To Alleviate Low Back Pain

Try these 3 stretches in the following sequence to help alleviate your back pain. If your pain worsens, skip that exercise and proceed to the next one.

Spend 3-5 minutes on each stretch.

Piriformis stretch—The piriformis muscle is the most common muscle to impinge the sciatic nerve. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds and repeat 4 times before switching to the other leg.



The left side is stretched in this diagram

Press Up and Hold Stretch—This is great for disc herniations because it decompresses the spine. Press up and hold for up to 1 minute before resting and stretching again. If pain worsens while stretching, skip this one and go to the next one.



Downward dog-Hold this pose for:

30 Seconds:Rest 30 seconds

1 minute:Rest 30 seconds

2 minutes:Rest 30 seconds Repeat



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