



Healthy Focus



How to Prevent Back Injuries

Back pain and injuries are among the most common reasons for missed work each year. In fact, back pain is the second most common reason for doctor's office visits, outnumbered only by upper-respiratory infections.

Below are some tips to help avoid back pain and injuries:

Stretch. Take some time to stretch before lifting heavy objects.

Slow Down. If you are doing a lot of heavy or repetitive lifting, taking it slow to help reduce injuries.

Stop. Remember to rest between lifting for extended periods of time.

Support. A firm mattress will give your back support and help you recover more quickly during the night.

Shape. Strengthening your core and maintaining flexibility will help you stay in shape and combat back pain.

Source: American Chiropractic Association



How to Add More Fruits and Vegetables to Your Diet

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is necessary for good health and provides many benefits. Good nutritional health can help control your blood pressure and cholesterol. Although there are many benefits, many of us have trouble getting five or more servings a day into our diets. It is a common misconception that healthy foods cost a lot more than processed foods. This way of thinking is not necessarily true. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture stated that three servings of fruits and four servings of vegetables cost about \$2 per day.

Here are some tips for adding more fruits and vegetables into your diet:

1. **Know Your Needs.** The current guidelines for adults is 2 cups of fruit and 3 cups of vegetables each day, but more is even better.
2. **Switch Sides.** Skip the greasy fries and choose the corn on the cob, tossed salad or any grilled vegetable on the menu.
3. **Be Sneaky.** It is easy to add vegetables to dishes you prepare regularly. Add thinly sliced zucchini or carrots to pasta sauce, meat loaf and chili.
4. **Blend It.** Making a fruit smoothie is a great way to get a few servings of fruit in at one time. Add vegetables to your smoothie for more flavor and nutrients.
5. **Dip Them.** Instead of using chips or crackers, switch to vegetables with hummus, salsa, bean spread, or peanut butter.
6. **Start the Day Off Right.** Swap your morning bagel or pastry for a veggie-filled omelet, fruit smoothie or oatmeal topped with fruit.
7. **Try it Raw.** Raw vegetables are good for you, and your kids will love them too. Add them to lunches for color and flavor.
8. **Frozen is Fine.** In the winter months, it can be hard to find fresh berries and vegetables so buy the frozen ones! They are processed within an hour of harvesting, so the flavor and nutritional values are well preserved.

source: everydayhealth.com

Did You Know?

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables may help reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers.

+ Exercise at Your Desk 10 Simple Tips for Easing Back Pain

One-half of all working Americans admit to having back pain symptoms each year and more than \$50 billion is spent each year on back pain and preventable injuries. Below are some ways you can help prevent back pain without ever leaving your desk!

1. Stand up and sit down (with no hands). In essence, this exercise mimics a "squat." It helps to strengthen your back muscles, as well as your hamstrings, glutes and thighs.

2. You can exercise while sitting at work. Think about getting rid of your desk chair and substitute an exercise ball. Sitting on an exercise ball will help you engage your back and core muscles, helping to prevent back pain and injuries.

3. Shrug your shoulders. Inhale deeply and shrug your shoulders, lifting them to your ears. Hold. Release and drop. Repeat this three to four times. This exercise will help release tension in your neck and shoulders.

4. Loosen your hands with air circles. Clench both fists, stretching both hands out in front of you. Make circles in the air, first in one direction, to the count of ten, then reverse and repeat.

5. Point your fingers. This is a great stretch for your hands, wrists and forearms. Stretch your left hand out in front of you, pointing fingers toward the floor. Use your right hand to increase the stretch, pushing your fingers down toward the body.

6. Release your upper body with a torso twist. Inhale and as you exhale, turn to the right and grab the back of your chair with your right hand, causing your torso to twist. Hold the twist and let your eyes scan the room. Slowly come back forward and repeat on the other side.

7. Do leg extensions. This exercise is great for your abdominal and leg muscles. Simply grab the seat of your chair to brace yourself and extend your legs straight out in front of you so they are parallel to the floor. Flex and point your toes five times. Relax and repeat.

8. Stretch your back with a "big hug." Hug your body, placing the right hand on your left shoulder and the left hand on your right shoulder. Breathe in and out, releasing the area between your shoulder blades.

9. Cross your arms. This stretch is great for the shoulders and upper back. Extend one arm out straight in front of you. With your other hand, grab the elbow of your outstretched arm and pull it across your chest, stretching your shoulder and upper back muscles.

10. Stretch your back and shoulders with a "leg hug." Sit on the edge of your chair, put your feet together, and make sure they are flat on the floor. Lean over, chest to knees, letting your arms dangle loosely to the floor. Release your neck and take some deep breaths.

Source: Center for Disease Control & Prevention

How Safe is the Food in Your Home?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick from foodborne diseases. Reduce your risk for food poisoning by safely preparing your meals so everyone can enjoy.

Illness-causing bacteria can survive in many places around your kitchen, including your hands, utensils and cutting boards. Wash your hands for 20 seconds and dry them with a disposable paper towel, clean cloth or allow them to air dry. Don't forget your surfaces:

- Keep kitchen surfaces such as appliances, countertops, cutting boards and utensils clean with hot, soapy water.
- A smelly dishcloth, towel or sponge is a sure sign that unsafe bacterial growth is lurking nearby, as it lives and grows in damp conditions.



- Wash dishcloths and towels in the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Disinfect sponges in a chlorine bleach solution.
- Replace worn sponges frequently.

Cross-contamination is how bacteria can spread. It occurs when juices from raw meats or germs from unclean objects touch cooked or ready-to-eat foods. Here are some tips to help you avoid cross-contamination:

- At the grocery store, separate fresh or frozen raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from produce and ready-to-eat foods in your shopping cart and grocery bags.
- If you are using reusable grocery totes to transport groceries, place meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags to prevent juices from leaking.
- Place groceries in the back seat instead of the trunk of a vehicle.
- Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood on bottom shelf of refrigerator in a sealed container or plastic bag to ensure juices don't drip onto ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep eggs in original carton and store on shelves of refrigerator—not in the door.

Source: homefoodsafety.org