

Top 10 tips to manage your lower back pain

If you're a parent you have definitely suffered from back pain at some point in your life. Around 4.0 million (16%) people in Australia were estimated to be living with back problems, according to self-reported data in the 2022 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Health Survey (NHS) (ABS 2023). Back problem prevalence increased with increasing age and was similar for males and females.

According to an article published in the National Library of Medicine. There has been a plethora of studies regarding the epidemiology of pregnancy- related LBP. Rates range from 25% to 90%, with most studies estimating that 50% of pregnant women will suffer from LBP. One third of them will suffer from severe pain, which will reduce their quality of life. Eighty percent of women suffering from LBP claim that it affects their daily routine and 10% of them report that they are unable to work.

So it's absolutely essential to reduce the strain on the lower back during daily activities by following the simple steps below. Some of them you might think are so simple but I can assure you they require effort to practice.

1. Movement is key

Movement is still key. Bed rest is definitely not recommended for back pain. If the pain is very strong, you may see your GP to get medication so that you can still move. I also recommend using a back brace if ALL movements are painful and if you're in constant pain. Seeing a Physio early on will help to get the right fit.

2. Do not sit for more than 30 minutes at a time.

Prolonged sitting is one of the worst things you can do for your back! This includes any activity that you may be doing while sitting. For example, driving or watching T.V. Sitting puts tremendous pressure on the structures of your lower back especially if you slouch or sit unsupported like in the front of the chair rather than to the back when typing! This in turn can put strain on the structures of the spine and cause muscle imbalances by tightening up certain muscles ultimately leading to pain.



3. Avoid or at least restrict bending over

Bending over is another activity that can create pressures up to 2 to 3 times your body weight! It can cause undue pressures on the structures of the lower back like the discs, joints and ligaments leading to pain and inflammation. Have you ever done your back lifting something in the gym or at work or at home?! All that manual handling training at work is not for nothing. So if you need to bend to pick up things from the floor (like toys! for parents), use your legs! It is a conscious effort initially but soon you'll get into a habit of doing it. Here's my video on the correct lifting technique:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/Y6m1Jnr6LAU?feature=share>



4. Do not slouch when sitting. Correct your sitting posture.

Slouching takes away the normal curve of the spine and puts undue pressure on the structures of the spine. It also pushes the neck forward causing poor posture and muscle imbalances eventually leading to pain. So it's very important to remember to keep your back supported while you're sitting and keep your neck aligned with the rest of your spine. Check this video for a simple exercise you can do to improve your posture:

Posture video: <https://youtube.com/shorts/2tU5BMkeFLE?feature=share>

5. Avoiding prolonged sitting does not mean standing for hours at your stand up desk

So just because I said you cannot sit for more than 30 minutes at a time, does not mean you stand for long periods either. There needs to be a balance. Basically any prolonged positioning is not good for your spine. Simply put, it's best to keep changing your position every 30- 40 minutes as this helps the blood flow in your joints. But if you have a sitting job you may consider standing for maybe 10 -15 mins at a time and alternate that with sitting and moving about.

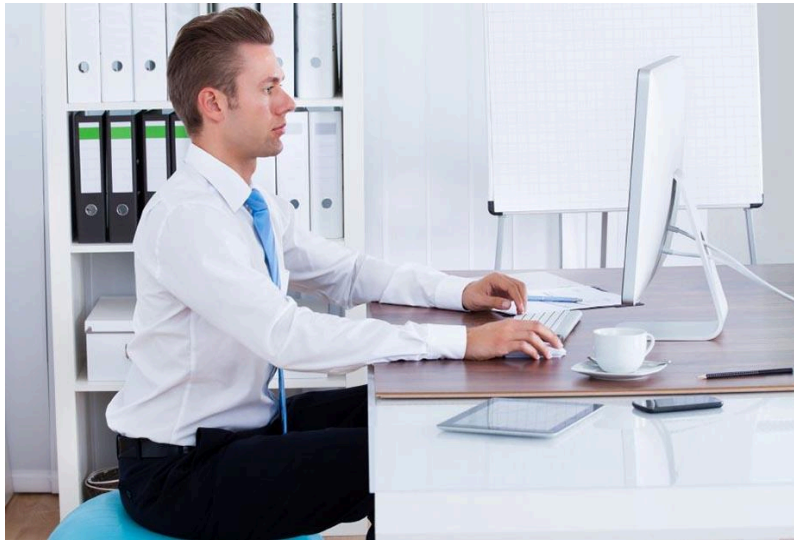


6. Set up your workstation correctly

This has become really important as so many of us are working from home these days. If your desk and computer screen are not at the right height, again your joints and muscles have to work hard to maintain your position. This in turn leads to tightness in your muscles and eventually pain in the lower back. Take the following steps to ensure the right posture while sitting at work:

- Eyes should be at the level of top of the screen
- Sit right back in the chair not on the edge

- Pull the desk closer so your elbows don't have to extend
- Use a chair with arm rests so elbows can rest at 90 degrees
- Hips and knees should be at right angles.
- Use an ergonomic wrist support
- Use a chair with a good back support
- Ideally only work with 1 screen at a time.
- Do the simple postural exercise (check the video in point #4) every hour.



7. Space your activities out through the day

If you're a mom, you want to fit in as many things as you can the moment you have a minute. Well this won't really help your lower back pain. Try to do activities in bouts. So maybe instead of mowing your lawn for 2 hours straight , you might think of breaking it down into 30 minute chunks and do it over the day if you can help it! It will take you longer to do the task, I understand, but sometimes you have to slow down to recover.

8. Avoid pushing/pulling furniture or lifting things

Pushing/pulling/ moving furniture for that matter will create undue stress on the lower back similar to bending over and prolonged sitting. This will create inflammation or swelling or muscle tension that will cause pain. So it's important to restrict or completely avoid these movements to give a chance to your lower back to heal.



9. Follow these do's and don'ts even when you are pain free

This is one of the most common reasons why people end up hurting their lower back again. They forget to follow these principles once they have recovered from a previous injury. I can understand if you stop doing the exercises but these principles are a lifestyle change and not something to do short term. So if you are really looking to have a long term result, it is important to follow the steps even if you don't have lower back pain.

10. Core strengthening does not just mean doing crunches!



The core does not just mean your tummy muscles or trying to get a 6 pack. And just doing crunches will not give you a strong core. The core consists of a lot of different muscles. You can watch my short 60 seconds video here:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/VN2G2geB4N8?feature=share>

It's important to strengthen these muscles in order to recover from back pain but also maintain your back so the pain does not come back.

Finally, remember pain is not normal. So if you are still feeling lower back pain, make sure you see a Physiotherapist as soon as possible. Do not wait for it to get worse.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us on 07 3800 3417.

Warm regards,

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