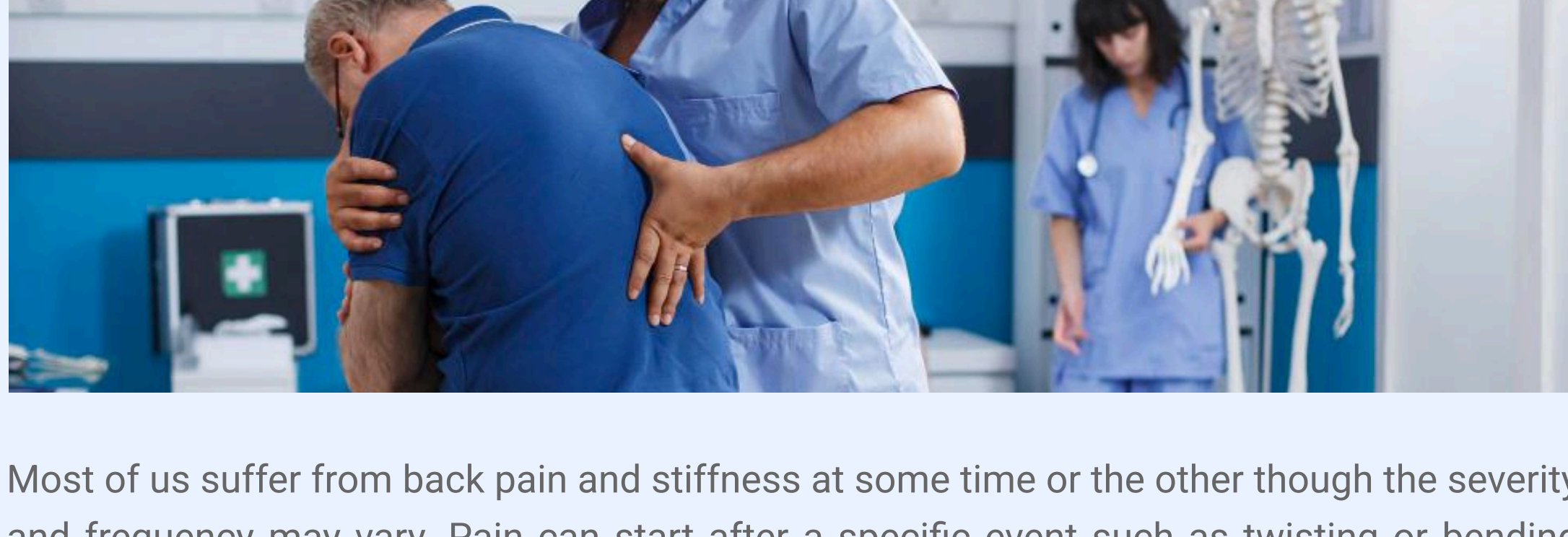




Back Pain

(Cure is in the front !)



Most of us suffer from back pain and stiffness at some time or the other though the severity and frequency may vary. Pain can start after a specific event such as twisting or bending over at the waist or in some cases pain can occur for no apparent reason. Generally acute back pain (sudden or short time occurrence) will get better by itself, usually in less than 4 weeks. When pain keeps recurring or continues at a mild level it is referred to as chronic back pain.

What Causes Back Pain?

Back pain can be caused by a number of factors from injuries to the effects of aging. Most acute back pains in middle aged people are caused by muscle or ligament strain which is often a result of:

- Bad lifting technique
- Lack of fitness or being overweight
- Over-stretching or overuse of your back muscles
- Poor posture (both standing and sitting) and muscle tone

Risk increases with sedentary occupations, strenuous and infrequent physical activity such as occasional sports participation, wearing high heel shoes and smoking. The strained muscles go in to spasm, especially those muscles which are weak or have been underused.

Other Causes Of Back Pain

Sometimes problems with bowels, Kidney, and other abdominal organs may present as back pain. Some of the conditions can be serious and may present only as back pain with no symptoms in the abdomen. It is common experience to many women to get back pain during their periods. Diseases of womb, ovary and other pelvic diseases can present as back pain.



Can Osteoporosis Cause Back Pain?

Osteoporosis is decreased amount of bone. It is usually associated with reduced strength and elasticity of muscles and ligaments. "Wear and tear" in the discs and the small joints of the back is also normally present. Osteoporosis can also cause back pain due to minor fractures in the spine particularly in postmenopausal women.

Does One Need To Worry About Back Pain?

No! But one need to see a doctor immediately if they have following warning

- Feel numb or have pins and needles in one or both legs or around back passage, genital area, or inside the tops of thighs
- Urine or motion leaks without your knowledge or you can't pass urine
- Feeling unsteady (can't stand without support) or both legs feel weak
- Generally unwell, such as if you have a high temperature as well as severe back pain
- You have weight loss or night sweats
- Back pain is getting worse over a period of time (more than 4 weeks) for no apparent reason.



What is sciatica?

Sciatica is pain that shoots down the leg from the buttock to foot. It may be due to a bulging disc in spine pressing on a nerve (slipped disc) or it could be caused by spasm of the muscles around the nerve in the back, buttock or leg.

What can you do to help yourself?

If you do not have any of the warning signs, then the pain is likely to be caused by muscular spasm. In such cases during the First 1-2 days, take it easy. Try not to bend forwards and try not to strain. Do not spend much time sitting in a chair for long periods. Apply a heat or ice pack to the area for your comfort. Take medication as advised.

If the pain lasts longer than 1-2 days "Keep Active and Get Moving".

Moving around won't do your back any harm even if it hurts – in fact it may help pain get better faster. Lying in bed for too long will not help and it may even make it worse. Carry out your normal activities like going to work (non strenuous) or going for short walks and cooking etc. But try not to overdo things.

What is the role of physiotherapy?

Physiotherapy is a good adjuvant treatment and a therapist can advise you on the posture, movements and exercises in addition to using some local pain relief measures.

What is the use of a corset or a back belt?

A well fitting corset can provide warmth, comfort and a degree of support to your back. It should really apply pressure and hold the abdomen for it to work on the back. It's best to use a brace only for short periods or during back-straining activities. The best brace you can give yourself is your own muscle corset by building up your muscles with exercises. Strong muscles in the front mean less back pain.

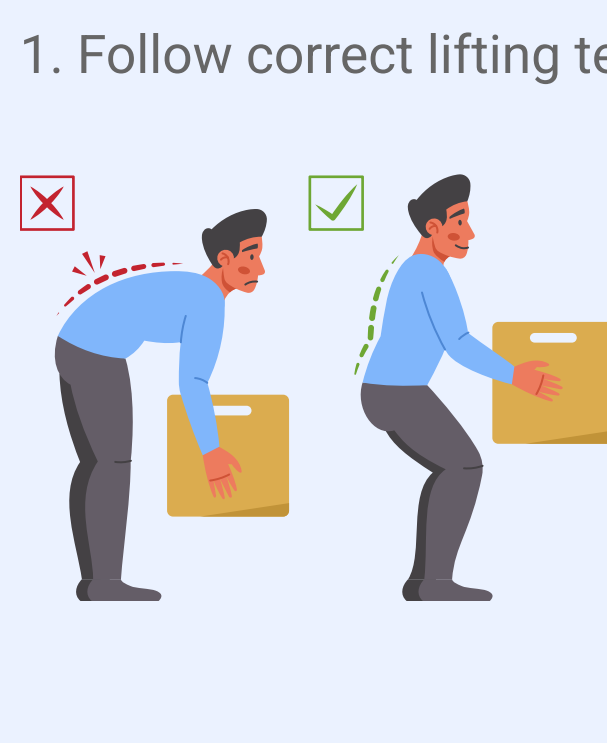
How can you reduce the risk of back pain?

Keeping your back fit and maintaining a good posture". Regular aerobic activities that don't strain your back can increase strength and endurance in your lower back. Strengthen your back and abdominal muscles. Flexibility in your hips and upper legs allows for proper pelvic bone alignment, which improves back pain.

- **Walking** is usually helpful – start slowly on flat ground wearing back belt, building up to longer walks and gentle slopes.
- **Exercise bike** is a good way of getting fit. Keep the saddle at correct height to keep the natural curves in your spine (wear corset if necessary)
- **Swimming** is an excellent exercise – do back or front-crawl instead of breast-stroke which can strain your neck.
- Proper shoes and reduction of weight, if one is obese

What are the simple tips to avoid back pain?

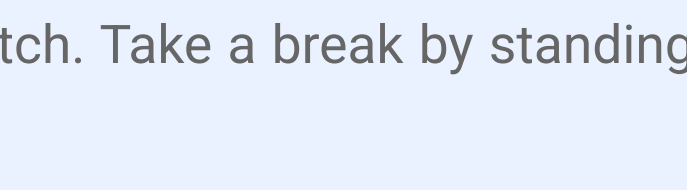
1. Follow correct lifting techniques



Do not bend at your waist, bend at the knees. When lifting luggage, stand along side of the luggage, bend at your knees, grasp the handle and straighten up. To lift a very light object from the floor (a piece of paper), lean over the object, slightly bend one knee and extend the other leg behind you. Hold on to a nearby chair or table for support as you reach down to the object.

2. Sit up right and try to lift your head and stretch yourself into a tall, relaxed posture in a proper chair. Avoid sitting for longer than 30 minutes at a stretch. Take a break by standing, even if it's just for a few seconds.

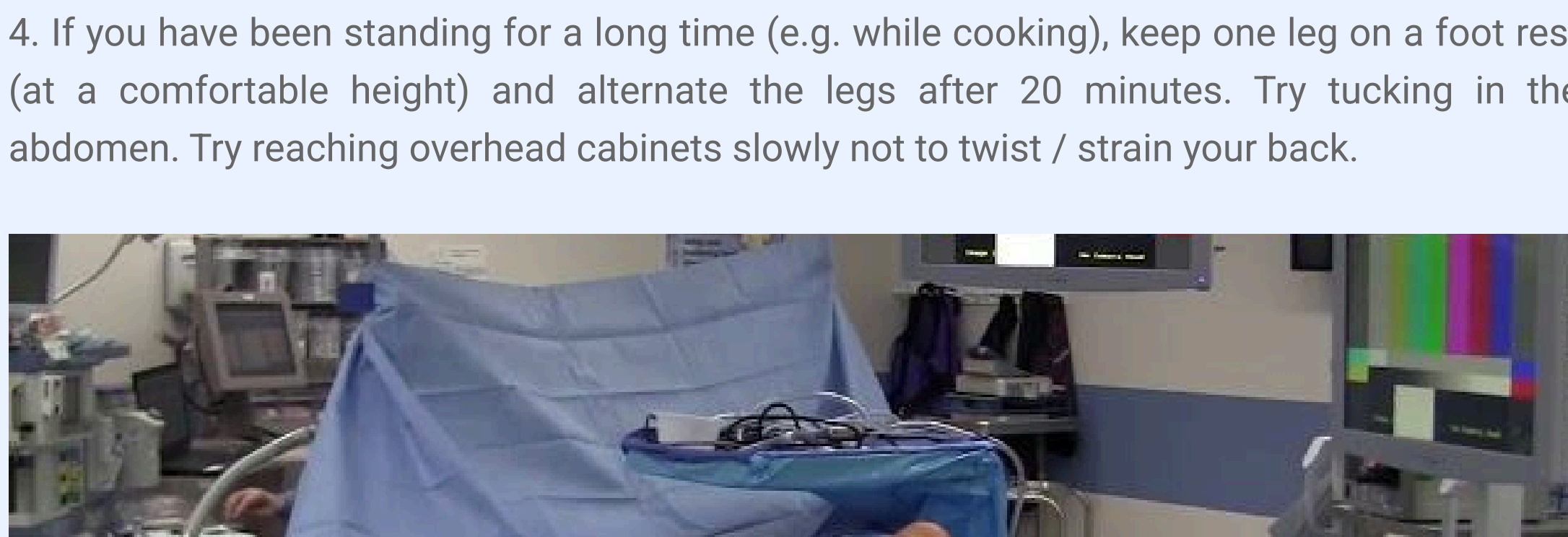
Make sure your chair supports your lower back (or place a small pillow at waist level); working surface is at the proper height so you don't have to lean forward. Now and then stand and stretch.



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3. Sleep on a firm but comfortable bed. No need to sleep on the floor! Get up sideways when you rise from bed, and not in haste.

4. If you have been standing for a long time (e.g. while cooking), keep one leg on a foot rest (at a comfortable height) and alternate the legs after 20 minutes. Try tucking in the abdomen. Try reaching overhead cabinets slowly not to twist / strain your back.



5. While driving a car adjust the seat so that your arms are comfortably positioned on the steering wheel. Sit upright and do not hunch over the steering or slouch in the seat. Avoid long drives especially if you already suffer from back pain.

A few simple back exercises

Lie on your stomach. Tighten the muscles in one leg and raise it from the floor. Hold your leg up for a count of 10 and return it to the floor. Do the same with the other leg. Repeat five times with each leg.

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Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on floor. Slowly raise your head and shoulders off the floor and reach with both hands toward your knees. Count to 10. Repeat five times.

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on your bed or floor. Raise your knees toward your chest. Place both hands under your knees and gently pull your knees as close to your chest as possible. Do not raise your head. Do not straighten your legs as you lower them. Start with five repetitions, several times a day.

Piriformis Stretch - Lie on back with both knees bent. Cross one leg on top of the other. Pull opposite knee to chest until a stretch is felt in the buttock/hip area. Hold 20 seconds. Relax. Repeat 5 times each side.