

# Back to Basics

## Posture-perfect

Believe it or not, proper posture is one of the first lines of defense against back pain. Confused about what it means to stand up straight? Then keep this image in mind: Keep your ears above your shoulders, hold your shoulders above your hips and your hips above your knees and feet. When sitting, preserve the curve in your lower back by tucking a rolled towel behind you. Get up at least once an hour to stretch.

## Lose excess weight

A bad back and extra pounds are a bad combination. Slim down and your back will benefit.

## Move a muscle

Strengthening the muscles that support your legs, back and abdomen is a good way to prevent back pain. Swimming is a good choice, especially if you've hurt your back before. Walking and cycling also are recommended.

## Lift it right

Use your legs, not your back, to lift heavy objects. Place one foot slightly ahead of the other, bend your knees, tighten your stomach muscles, pick up the load and lift, keeping your back straight and the object close to your body.

## Don't sleep on it

The best way to spend the night? Lying on your side, a pillow tucked between your knees. Avoid sleeping on your stomach, and if you must sleep on your back, put a pillow under your knees.

## Take a load off

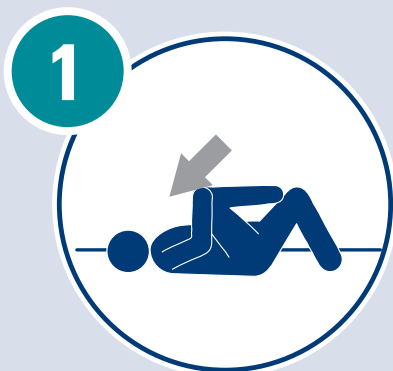
Lugging a heavy shoulder bag (more than 5 pounds)? Unload unnecessary items and switch the bag from shoulder to shoulder.

## Wear sensible shoes

Alternate between flats and 2-inch heels. Wear well-fitting athletic shoes during your leisure time.

## Back Pain Exercises

Strengthening your back is essential for preventing and managing pain. Practice these exercises to strengthen your back muscles.



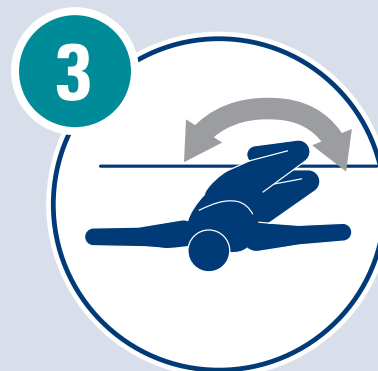
### Knee to Chest Stretch

Either on the ground or a firm bed, lay on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the ground. Bring one knee to the chest and pull in gently with both hands at the knee. **Hold for 30 seconds, two times each leg.**



### Hamstring Stretch

Using a stable bed or table, sit on one hip and extend one leg out along the table or bed with toes to the sky and ankle relaxed. Leave the opposite foot firmly planted on the floor with toes facing forward. Sit up nice and tall, then bend from the hip forward to stretch the extended leg. Alternate the stretch on right and left leg. **Hold for 30 seconds, two times each.**



### Lumbar Trunk Rotation Stretch

Either on the ground or a firm bed, lay on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the ground. Slowly rock the knees side to side, keeping the low back on the ground/bed. **Repeat ten times each leg.**