

# HOW TO HELP PREVENT BACK INJURIES



Back problems are a common problem in our country. In fact, 80% of Americans will experience a back issue during some point in their life.<sup>1</sup>

The back is involved in almost every motion your body makes, and it only takes one wrong move to trigger an injury.

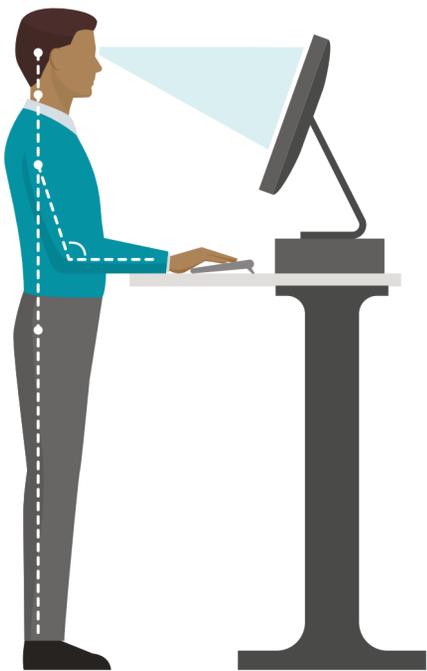
To minimize the risk of back injuries, make sure you understand the three keys of back safety: posture, lifting, and fitness.

## KEY #1: POSTURE

Maintaining proper posture while working is the first lesson to learn about back safety and health.

### While standing, you should:

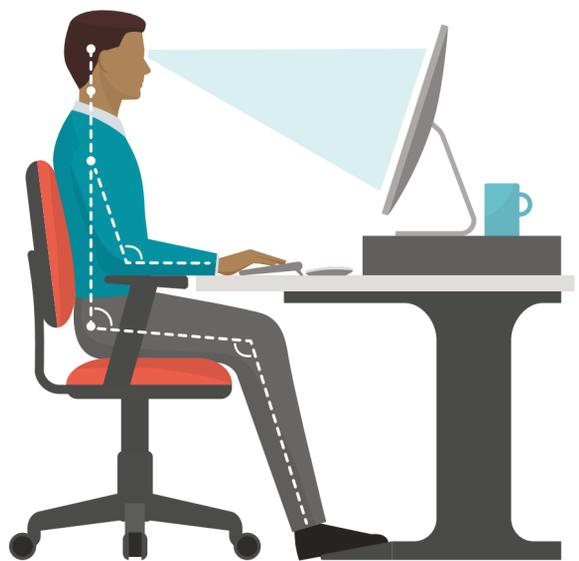
- Keep your head vertical and facing forward.
- Stand straight with your ears, shoulders, and hips aligned.
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart while keeping your weight balanced.



Elevating one foot on a footrest (and then switching feet after several minutes) can also help prevent back problems. And if you must stand for long periods, try standing on an anti-fatigue or padded mat.

### While sitting, you should:

- Keep your head vertical and facing forward.
- Sit straight by keeping your ears, shoulders, and hips aligned.
- Keep your thighs parallel to the floor and your knees bent at a roughly 90-degree angle.
- Rest your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.



If you are sitting most of the day, you should have a comfortable, adjustable chair with a firm backrest. You should also consider a lumbar support pillow for extra lower back support. Take breaks periodically throughout the day to get up, stretch, and walk around.

## KEY #2: SAFE LIFTING

Back injuries can be caused by improper lifting and carrying. Be sure to use good body mechanics every time you lift, carry, and unload objects.

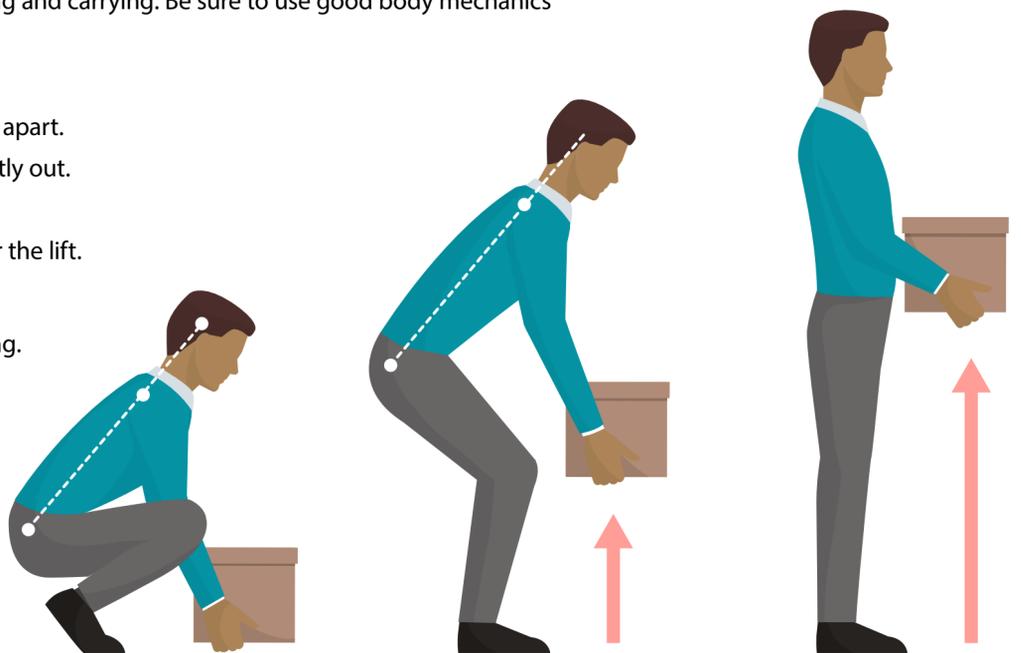
### While lifting, you should:

- Face the load with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Keep your heels down and feet turned slightly out.
- Squat by bending at the hips and knees.
- Use your leg and stomach muscles to power the lift.

### While carrying objects, you should:

- Point your feet in the direction you're moving.
- Walk at a slow and steady pace.
- Take small steps and turn as a single unit to avoid twisting your upper body.
- Hug the load.

When you set down a load, reverse the lifting process by bending your knees and letting your leg and stomach muscles bear the weight as you lower.



## KEY #3: FITNESS

The third key to back safety and health is fitness. Being overweight can change your center of gravity and put extra pressure on your back—but staying within 10 pounds of your ideal weight should be enough to offset this problem.<sup>2</sup> You can help maintain a healthy weight with light to moderate exercise.

Before starting any exercise program, ask your doctor for specific back-fitness exercises and if any exercises should be avoided.

<sup>1</sup>"40 Back Pain Statistics (To Send a Shiver Down Your Spine)." *The Good Body*, 2022

<sup>2</sup>Smith, Michael. "16 Ways to Avoid Back Pain." *WebMD*, 2021

## FIVE BACK SAFETY ESSENTIALS

Though there's a lot to consider when taking care of your back, memorizing the following five tips will keep you on the right track:

1. Keep your back strong and fit with a healthy lifestyle.
2. Maintain good posture, whether you're standing or sitting.
3. Be aware of your back every time you move.
4. Avoid improper movements that cause back problems.
5. Use good body mechanics when you lift.

Keep this information in mind throughout each day, and you'll be able to keep your back healthy and strong for years to come.