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## ***Lower Back Health and Fitness***

Back pain is now one of the most common medical complaints in the U.S. It is estimated that 80 percent of adults in North America will have at least one episode of back pain sufficiently severe that they lose time from work. The cost of lower back pain in the United States as a result of time lost from work and permanent disability is estimated to be \$75 billion per year.

The good news is that many injuries to the lower back can be prevented. Following are some tips for maintaining a strong and healthy back.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** A healthy weight is instrumental in relieving pressure on the back and easing or avoiding lower back pain. Aerobic exercise, strength training and proper nutrition are keys to maintaining your weight.
- **Strengthen your “core” region – your back, abdominals and hips.** Strengthening the muscles that support the spine will help hold the spine in proper posture and reduce the risk of lower back injury. Weaknesses in the core region are often key contributors to lower back sprains and strains. When these muscles are in poor condition, additional stress is applied to the spine as it supports the body. Strong abdominal and lower back muscles can also help speed healing and recovery from lower back pain or injury.
- **Strengthen your legs.** Along with the core muscles, the leg muscles play a vital role in helping you maintain good posture and body mechanics. Strong leg muscles can also take much of the burden off the back when you’re lifting heavy items.
- **Stay flexible.** Stretching the muscles, ligaments and tendons around the spine is crucial to maintaining a strong and healthy back. The spinal column is designed to move, and tightness can hinder movement, increase stress on the lower back, and accentuate pain.
- **Maintain good posture.** Correct posture and body mechanics play a vital role in preventing back pain. Pressure on the discs and strains of the muscles, ligaments and back joints are aggravated by incorrect posture and body mechanics. When your posture is good and you move your body correctly, you reduce the strain on your back.
- **Warm up before activity.** Beginning any activity with cold muscles and joints puts you at risk for injury. Take the time to get your muscles and joints warm and limber first.
- **Lift items properly.** Protect your back when lifting anything by standing close to the object with your feet apart to give you a stable base. Squat down while keeping the spine in proper alignment and contract your abdominals as you lift using your legs.

If you are interested in starting a fitness program, but are concerned about lower back pain, I can work with your physician or chiropractor to design a safe and effective program to strengthen and stretch your back and help you create a healthy lifestyle.

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*look, feel, be better!*

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