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*"An Injury To One Is The Concern Of All"*

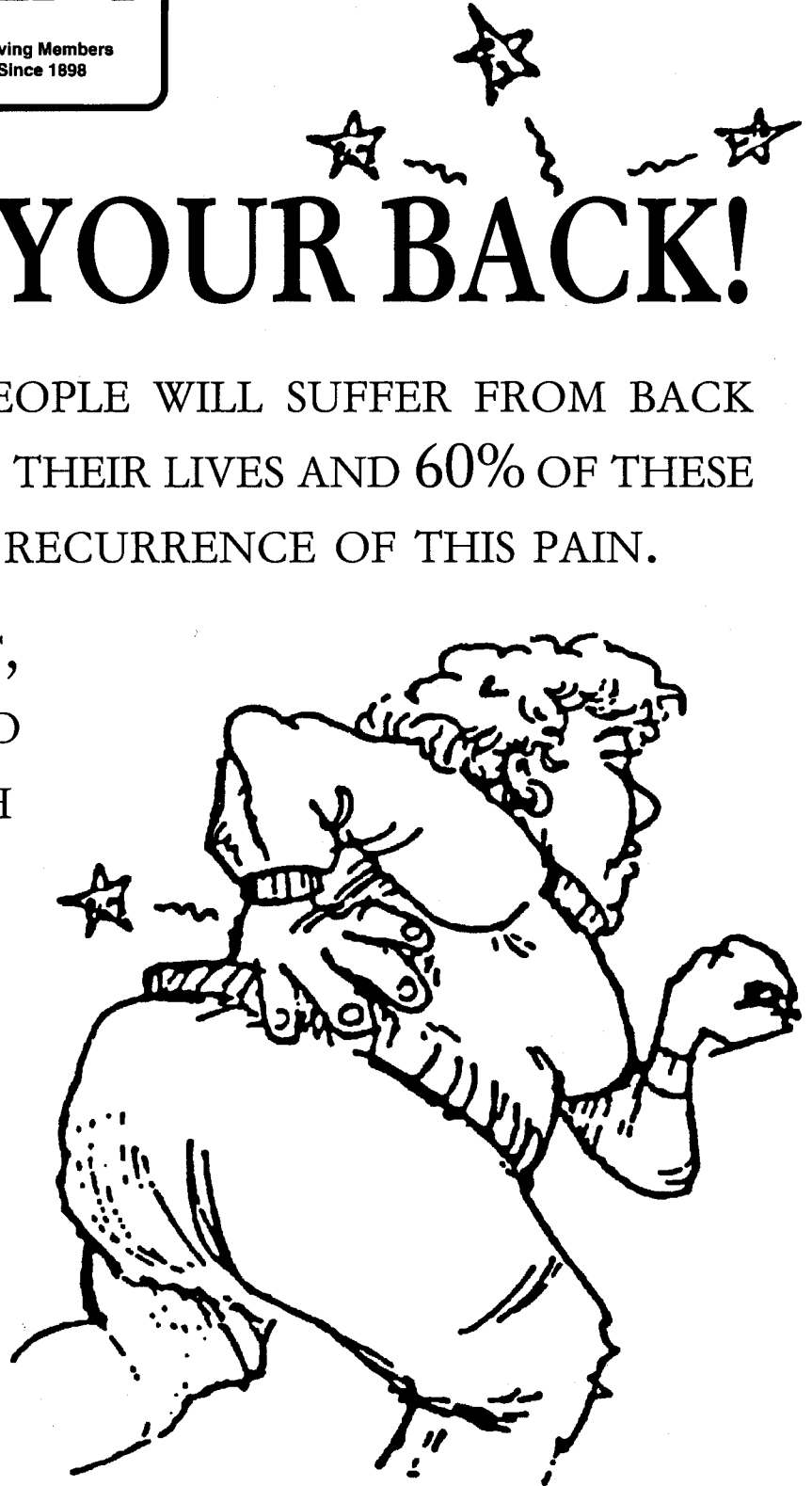
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# WATCH YOUR BACK!

EIGHT OUT OF 10 PEOPLE WILL SUFFER FROM BACK PAIN AT SOME TIME IN THEIR LIVES AND 60% OF THESE PEOPLE WILL HAVE A RECURRENCE OF THIS PAIN.

EVERY DAY YOU LIFT, PUSH, STAND, SIT AND DRIVE, ALL OF WHICH INCREASE YOUR RISK OF BACK INJURY.

THIS BOOKLET OFFERS TIPS TO HELP PREVENT BACK INJURIES AND RELIEVE BACK PAIN.



# WATCH YOUR BACK!

**PROPER LIFTING:** Many back injuries result from lifting. Just as champion weight lifters have developed ways to lift without hurting themselves, a proper technique for lifting means a healthy back. Lift by following these steps:

**PUSH! DON'T PULL:** When moving something heavy, PUSH! don't pull, so that you won't twist and stress your back. Keep your body low and close to the load like a football lineman blocking a tackle. Use your legs and body weight to move an object.

**POSTURE:** Correct posture reduces stress on the low back because you use your body efficiently, requiring less muscular work.

**STANDING:** Stand straight with head and shoulders back, knees slightly bent and buttock tucked in. To relieve pressure on your spine, change foot position often: shift from one foot to another or raise one foot on a low box or stool.

Wear comfortable low shoes. High heels throw your weight forward increasing swayback and strain to keep your body upright.

**SITTING:** Sit on chairs low enough to keep your feet on the floor and thighs supported. Rest your elbows on a desk or arm rests. Keep your knees higher than your hips by raising your feet on a low box or stool. This keeps your spine straight and supported against the chair.



Try using a low back roll for good spinal alignment.

Do not slouch or lean forward over desk, table, etc.

**DRIVING:** Sit straight. A low back roll will help maintain proper spinal alignment. Pull your seat in close to the steering wheel and keep your knees higher than your hips. This way you won't arch your back when reaching for foot controls.

Don't slouch or hunch over the wheel.

Make frequent stops on long trips, at least every two hours.

**SLEEPING:** A good night's rest is essential for a healthy back. Buy a firm supportive mattress; avoid one that is too firm. A bed board will help support a mattress that is sagging and soft.

Sleep on your side with knees bent and a pillow between your knees or on your back with a pillow under your knees. If you must sleep on your stomach, put a pillow under your abdomen.

**AVOID LYING ON STOMACH, IF POSSIBLE.**

**EXCESS BODY WEIGHT:** Did you know that 10 pounds of excess weight in the stomach is equal to 100 pounds of weight in the back? A pot belly speeds up the "wear and tear" type of arthritis of the back bones. To lose weight, eat moderately and exercise regularly. \*

**STRESS:** Stress, worry and mental attitudes are responsible for many back problems.

Financial worries, family pressures and fatigue increase muscular tension, especially in the low back.

To reduce stress, organize your daily routine to make life easier. Use physical exercise as an outlet for tensions. Consider a hobby as relief for stress.

Contrary to popular belief, drugs and alcohol are not the most effective relaxants. They disrupt sleeping patterns and in excess, may increase physical and mental deterioration.

**RELIEF FOR BACK PAIN:** To relieve your back pain, use heat or cold treatments along with rest and positioning. Used together, these treatments provide the best relief.

**HEAT:** relaxes tight, painful muscles and speeds healing of injured tissues. Moist heat penetrates deeper than dry heat.

**ELECTRIC HEATING PADS:** Apply dry heat or moist insert pads to the sore area for 20 minutes. You can do this often throughout the day. Never apply a pad without using the protective cloth outer cover.

**HOT PACKS:** Apply moist hot packs to the sore area for 20 minutes. You can do this often throughout the day. Never apply a hot pack directly to the skin. Be sure that several layers of towel are between your skin and the pack.

\*Ask your physician or physical therapist if you have any questions about starting an exercise program.

**To apply all types of heat:** To apply heat, lie on your side, sit in a chair or lie face down with a pillow under your stomach. **NEVER LIE ON THE HEAT SOURCE.**

**CHECK YOUR SKIN DURING THE TREATMENT.** If your skin gets deep red, the heat is too hot. Turn down the electric heating pad or put more towels between you and the hot pack.

Do not use heat over an area that has poor skin sensation.

(A quick and easy alternative may be helpful: take a 20-minute warm bath or shower with a pulsating shower head. It will give you some of the same benefits.)



**COLD:** can be used to relieve pain. The slight numbing effect of cold is an effective way to relieve muscle spasm and pain and help to speed healing.

**ICE PACK:** Wrap ice chips or crushed ice (they mold to your body better than cubes) in a damp face towel or fill a ziplock bag 2/3rds full. Place a damp face cloth between your skin and the ziplock pack so you will gradually adjust to the cold.

Leave the pack on your skin for 20 minutes.

You should feel only a cold sensation, not pain or discomfort.

**To apply all types of cold:**

To apply ice, lie on your side, sit in a chair, or lie face down with a pillow under your stomach.

**DO NOT LIE ON TOP OF THE ICE PACK.**

**Do not use ice over an area that is very sensitive to cold.**

Whether ice or heat is your choice, try both to find out which one works best for you.

**REST:** Correct rest positions can decrease stress on the back and stretch tight back muscles.

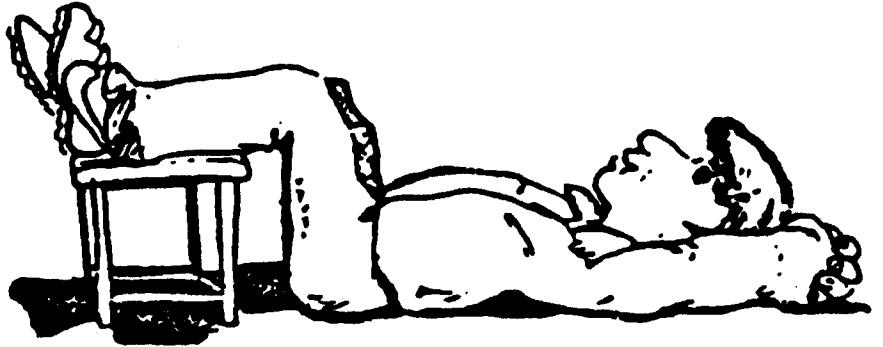
Lie on your side in bed or on the floor with a pillow under your head and another between your knees. Pull knees up toward your chest.

Stay in this position for 30 minutes, 3-5 times per day to relax your back.

If you have trouble getting into this position or if it increases your back pain, stop its use.

**POSITIONING:** Correct body positioning can relieve a nagging back ache by supporting the back and taking a load off the joints and muscles. Here are a few methods that you can try:

1. Lie flat on your back on a hard surface and place your legs up on pillows or on the seat of a chair. This position puts the least amount of strain on the back.



Stay in this position 10-20 minutes, 3-5 times per day when your back aches, or as a change from sitting.

STOP if your pain increases or if you have too much trouble getting in or out of this position.

2. Sit in a chair with your feet on the floor, thighs supported. Slowly lower your chest to your thighs and rest your head on your knees. Relax.

Do this when your back muscles feel tight or if you have been sitting awhile, to relieve pressure.

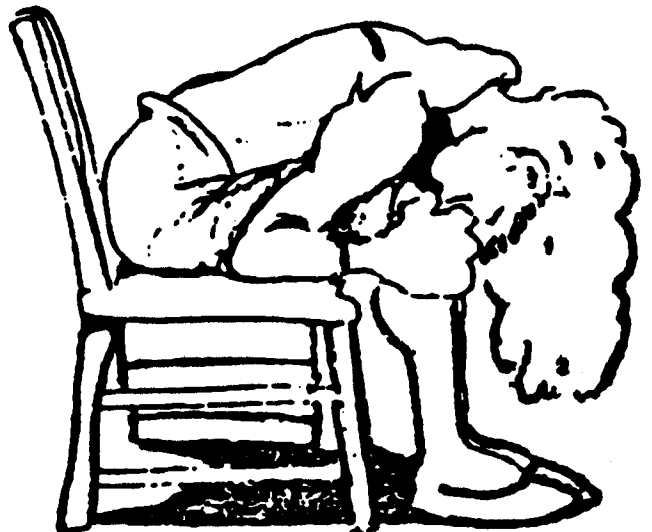
Hold it 1-2 minutes and do it frequently during the day.

If this position hurts your back, place a pillow on your lap. STOP if you become light-headed or dizzy.

3. You can construct a portable back support called a low back roll that will help you maintain upright posture while exerting less strain on your spine and back muscles.

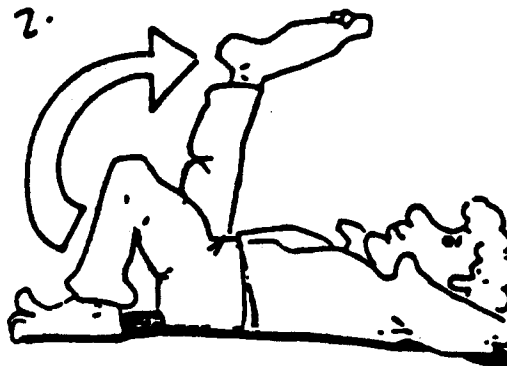
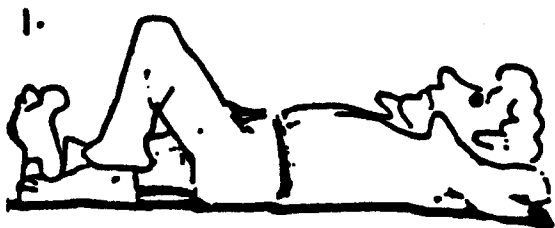
Roll a small towel up lengthwise into a "jelly" type roll which is about three inches in diameter. Tape each end so it won't unroll.

Insert the roll in the low back area at belt level while sitting in a chair and lean back in the chair to sit up straight.



Do this as tolerated, during any activity that requires sitting such as driving, working, eating, reading or watching TV.

If your back pain increases, try using a roll for a half hour, then removing it for a half hour, to gradually increase your tolerance.



**ACTIVITIES AT HOME:** Maintain a healthy back while doing your activities at home. Garden in short sessions. Use a self-propelled mower for lawns. Sit on a low stool or box, if you can, while gardening. If you have a back problem, let someone else do the tilling or heavy work. Before working limber up back and shoulder muscles. Use a power-driven upright vacuum instead of a canister. Kneel down and make one side of a bed at a time. Sit on a small stool when dusting low objects.

**EXERCISE:** to relieve pain and prevent injury.

Here are a few exercises you can do to keep your back flexible and strong. A stronger stomach and flexible hamstrings will take the load off your back.

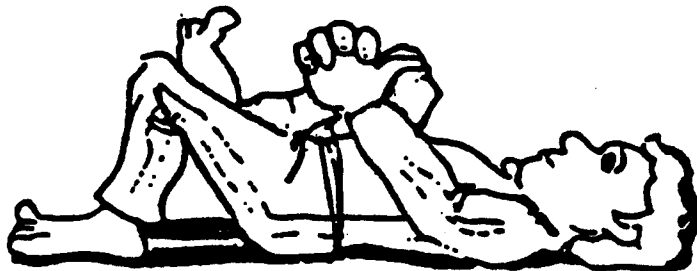
If you have a back problem of long duration or current back pain, ask your physician or physical therapist before starting an exercise program, to see which exercises are best for you.

You may do your exercises at home to warm up before starting work.

Do them two times daily, once in the morning and once in the evening.

Begin slowly.

Stop if you feel any pain or a marked increase in discomfort.



**PELVIC TILT:** to strengthen lower stomach and back muscles.

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor. Tighten your stomach muscles. Push the small of your back down against the floor, flattening the lower back. Hold 10 seconds, then relax. Repeat 5-10 times.

**KNEE TO CHEST:** To make back flexible.

Lie on your back with both knees bent and both feet on the floor.

Bring your right knee up to your chest, grasp with both hands, pull as close to your chest as you can.

Hold 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat 5-10 times. Alternate with left leg.

**LEG LIFTS:** To stretch hamstring muscles

Lie on the floor, left leg bent with foot on the floor, right leg straight.

Raise your right leg up; keep the right knee straight until you feel a stretch along the back of the thigh.

Hold 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat 5-10 times. Alternate with left leg.

**SUMMARY:**

**To relieve your back pain:**

Use rest, positioning, heat, ice and exercise

**To prevent low back pain and keep your back healthy:**

Use proper standing, sitting, driving and also sleeping postures,

Reduce excess stress and body weight;

Follow back saving tips at home and on the job;

Keep your back flexible and strong through exercise.

Remember **BACKS** while lifting

Bend your knees

Arch your back to put a hollow in it

Careful! Turn using your feet

Keep the load close to your body

Smoothly lift with legs, not just your back.

