10 Tips for a Healthy Back

1. **Standing** - Balance your weight evenly on both feet. Keep your legs straight but not locked. Stand upright with your head facing forward. Keep your back upright, while maintaining the natural curve in your spine.

2. **Sitting** - Sit upright. Feet flat on floor. Shoulders relaxed. Low back supported. Knees equal to or slightly lower than hips. Avoid crossing your legs if at all possible and if you must do so, be sure to switch sides periodically. Practice sitting at your desk/computer properly.

3. **Reaching** - Stand on a stool to reach items that are beyond shoulder level.

4. **Moving Heavy Items** - Pushing is easier on your back than pulling. Use your arms and legs to start the push. If you must lift a heavy item, get someone to help you.

5. **Lifting**... kneel down on one knee with the other foot flat on the floor as near as possible to the item you are lifting. Lift with your legs, not your back, keeping the object close to your body at all times.

6. **Carrying**... two small objects (one in either hand) may be easier to handle than one large one. If you must carry one large object, keep it close to your body.

7. **Sleeping**... sleeping on your back puts 55 lbs. of pressure on your back. Putting a couple of pillows under your knees cuts the pressure in half. Lying on your side with a pillow between your knees also reduces the pressure.

8. **Weight Control**... additional weight puts a strain on your back. Keep within 10 lbs. of your ideal weight for a healthier back.

9. **Quit Smoking**... smokers are more prone to back pain than nonsmokers because nicotine restricts the flow of blood to the discs that cushion your vertebrae.

10. **Minor Back Pain**... treat minor back pain with anti-inflammatories and gentle stretching, followed by an ice pack.

Resources:

- [www.knowyourback.org](http://www.knowyourback.org)
- [www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca) The College of Family Physicians Canada
- [www.cirpd.org/PainManagement/HealthTopics/BackPain](http://www.cirpd.org/PainManagement/HealthTopics/BackPain) – Canadian Institute for the Relief of Pain & Disability
- [http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/backexercises_advanced.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/backexercises_advanced.html) – Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety