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How to Prevent Back Injuries in the Home

Chiropractors comprise the largest group of holistic medicine practitioners in America. A holistic practitioner uses not only therapies that assist the body's own repair system (which produce minimal side effects), but he or she must also be concerned with the patients daily living activities to aid in the prevention of injuries. That's why chiropractors often ask questions about how you live and move through our earth's gravitational field.

Let's look at common causes of injuries that occur in the home. Moving furniture and slipping in the shower are the main instigators of low-back injury. The next three are: getting in and out of a car, putting on and removing shoes, and washing and drying hair (which often affects the neck). While these are less obvious and seemingly harmless activities, they often wrack profound damage on the body.

In The Shower

Hot showers, whirlpools, Jacuzzis, and saunas rapidly increase the body's core temperature, which forces the heart to pump blood away from the overheated core. (This unduly stresses the heart, unlike the manner in which proper cardiovascular exercises benefit it.) Heat shunts blood to the periphery, where skin pores open to dissipate heat. As the skin cools, so do the muscles making them less flexible and more likely to spasm.

When you're showering, the water temperature should be comfortably warm, not hot enough to steam the bathroom mirror. Gradually cool the shower water temperature when you're rinsing. This will acclimate the body to room temperature and decrease the chances of neck and back injury when you are drying. The risk of neck injury increases when the head is shaken and the cooled tight muscles are abruptly lengthened. While washing and drying your hair, move the hands, not the head. Do not shake, rotate or extend the neck, but keep it stable. Jerky movements after poor sleeping postures, combined with bone restrictions, will often cause injury.

While Getting Ready to Go Out

While washing, drying or dressing your feet, try to prevent the lordosis from reversing. Keep the trunk from flexing onto the pelvis by maintaining rigidity in the

lower back. An effective and preventative measure is to rest the foot atop a stool before reaching for it.

In The Car

Most of us enter and leave the car with our legs apart. This reverses the normal forward curve in the lower back (lordosis) and sets up the possibility of injury. If the architecture of the lumbar spine is changes abruptly, the support muscles can become overstretched, weakened or torn. Avoid entering/exiting with legs apart by imagining you are wearing a tight skirt! This will keep the knees together forcing you to go in rear end first. Once inside the cabin, push your pelvis back so that the entire spine is flush with the seat backrest. This position will support the small of the back if the seat contour is correct and the padding is firm. Proper ingress alone will not suffice; push the pelvis and spine into the backrest before driving.

The same principles should be employed when you get out of the car; keep the legs together while lifting them out of the cockpit, turn the trunk to align with the legs, wiggle the pelvis toward the doors threshold, and rise to a standing position.

How to Remember?

A good way to change such bad habits is to place a note close to where a particularly risky daily activity occurs. As a reminder, tape it to the outside of the shower stall, onto the dashboard near the speedometer, or by your dressing chair. In a few days notes will no longer be necessary.

In Health,

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