

Back Care around the house

Back pain affects about 98% of us at some time. By following a few simple tips you can ensure that you can do those everyday household activities without pain or discomfort.

Hoovering – bend your knees and keep your back straight, and avoid twisting movements.

Ironing – make sure the ironing board is high enough so that you are not bending over it. Iron in short bursts or sit down to iron.

Making beds – don't bend over to tuck the sheets in – go to the other side, or put your knee on the edge to provide support for your back. Don't change all the beds on the same day!

Shopping – when pushing a trolley that makes you twist to steer it, walk beside the trolley holding the side.

- Divide loads evenly on both sides when carrying shopping. Don't buy too many heavy things at once – use a shallow trolley to avoid excessive bending.
- Don't bend into the car boot to take the bags out, but put your knee on the back edge for support when reaching inside. Place the heaviest items at the front of the boot.
- Try using the supermarket's packing or home delivery service, or if you can, order online.



Babies and children – when lifting babies and toddlers keep them close to your body, using your strong leg muscles to do the work of lifting while you hold your back straight.

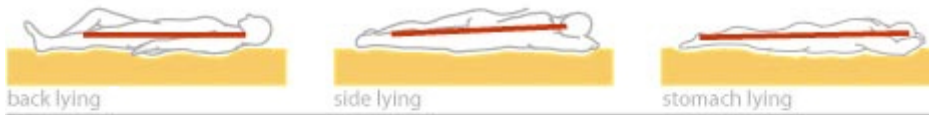
- When putting your child into a fixed car seat, put one foot into the footwell and slide the child on and off your thigh into the seat. There are now childseats available that rotate to face the open door so make sure you try different models prior to purchase.
- When using a child backpack make sure the padded waist belt is tightened first to take the load through your pelvis. Make sure the back pack is against your back.

Beds and mattresses

- A hard mattress is not necessarily the best for bad backs.
- You and your sleeping partner need to try a new mattress for at least 10 minutes before you buy.
- Consider the points below when shopping for a new mattress:
 1. Experiment with your own mattress first – try a stiff board under a mattress to make up for a sagging base.
 2. Don't take too much notice of the description on the product (e.g. "orthopaedic"). You have to find one that best fits your needs taking into account your height, weight, age, sleeping position and back problem.
 3. Your new bed needs to be high enough so that you can get up and sit down with ease. Wide enough especially if you or your partner is restless.
 4. The heavier the person the deeper the mattress should be. A soft or sprung base normally means more sag. A really giving surface is also harder to turn on.
 5. Interior sprung mattresses are the most common form of mattress and can provide sufficient support. Always choose as many springs as you can within your budget.
 6. Memory foam and latex work by responding to temperature and weight to relieve and disperse pressure. They often need less turning which can help prevent back strain but you must ensure you can change positions easily on the mattress to avoid back stiffness.
 7. Try and buy your mattress and base together. A solid base is good and offers support when sitting or getting off the bed. A good quality full sprung edge base is the most flexible.

8. Consider other aids depending on your sleeping posture – lumbar rolls, mattress toppers and shoulder pillows may help.
9. To test whether a bed has the right level of firmness for you is to lie down on your back and slide your hand between mattress and the small of your back. If there is a large gap the bed is probably too hard. If it is difficult to push your hand through – too soft. If your hand slides through but remains in contact with your back and the bed it is probably just right.
10. A bed needs testing for at least 10 minutes and some manufacturers do a home trial that is worth looking out for.

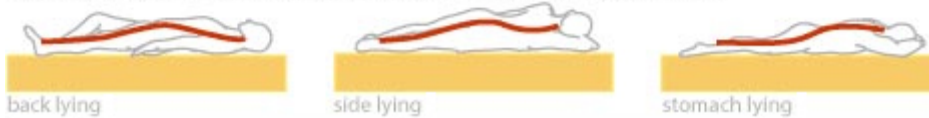
Just Right - Latex mattresses offer conforming support and even weight distribution to keep your spine naturally aligned in a fully relaxed position.



Too soft - While a soft bed may feel good at first, inadequate support of your lower back (where your body weight is concentrated) can cause pain and stiffness.



Too Firm - A hard sleep surface provides uneven support and causes uncomfortable high pressure areas that cause you to toss and turn during the night.



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