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## Department of Occupational Therapy

### Prevention of Lower Back Pain during Daily and Work Activities



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## 5.2 Sitting Posture and Workstation Recommendations



**Computer position:** Ensure that

- ☐ screen is one arm's length in front
- ☐ top of the screen slightly below eye level

**Back support:** Ensure that your lower back is fully supported by the backrest

**Seat/Desk height:** Adjust seat/desk height, to ensure that your

- ☐ elbow is bent at 90 degrees
- ☐ wrist is at neutral position
- ☐ knees and hips are bent at 90 degrees or more
- ☐ feet rest flat on the floor

**Seat depth:** Allow a 2-3 finger spacing between back of your knee and edge of the seat



## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Why Is It Important?

Household and daily activities involving repetitive and prolonged awkward positions (e.g. bending or twisting) or heavy lifting can place tremendous stress on the structures of the back. Over time, accumulated stress on the spine may result in progressive back injuries and symptoms of lower back pain.

Symptoms of lower back pain may also progress to numbness and weakness of the legs when there is injury to the nerves of the spine.

To prevent lower back pain from occurring or progressing, it is important to redesign task/work spaces and adopt correct manual handling techniques to ensure proper body position during daily activities and prevent injury.

## 5.0 Work-Related Activities

### 5.1 Lifting Recommendations

#### Considerations before lifting

- ☐ Ensure that there are no surrounding hazards
- ☐ If object is too heavy, consider
  - requesting for help
  - using a trolley
  - splitting the heavy load into smaller manageable loads
- ☐ Position heavy, commonly-used items within shoulder to waist level

#### Posture during lifting



- ☐ Tuck your chin in and keep your back straight
- ☐ Place object close to body and ensure a good grip on the object
- ☐ Use body weight to stand and lift smoothly without jerking
- ☐ Spread out your legs to gain balance

## 1.2 Body Mechanics

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Body mechanics refers to the way our bodies move during daily activities. Proper body mechanics can help you to avoid injury.

Avoid these movements:

- ☐ Excessive/sudden bending and twisting of the back
- ☐ Excessive forward/upward reaching
- ☐ Prolonged full squatting position results in excessive bending of back and stress to knees and back

## Exiting a Car

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- ☐ Lift the leg closest to the car door out of the car while turning your body



- ☐ Shift yourself out of the car by using stable surfaces (e.g. the support handle near the car roof)
- ☐ Hold on to a stable surface to bring yourself to a standing position



## Appropriate Sitting Posture in a Car

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- ☐ Shift your buttock as far into the seat as possible, avoid slouching in the seat



## 2.0 Self-care

### 2.1 Showering

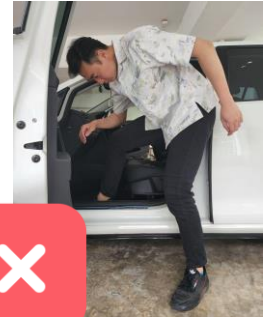
- ❑ A shower chair accompanied by a hand-held shower head allows you to sit to shower
- ❑ Use of grab bars when you stand can help relieve some of the pressure that standing places on your back
- ❑ Place non-slip mats on slippery surfaces to reduce the risk of falls
- ❑ Gather your toiletries/clothes and place them within easy reach (i.e. shoulder to waist level in front of you)
- ❑ Lift your legs or use a long-handled sponge when washing the lower body to minimize excessive bending



## 4.0 Getting in and out of a Car

### Entering a Car

- ❑ Do not step into the car directly with one leg and attempt to bend your back to enter
- ❑ Instead, lower yourself slowly into the car and sit down with your buttocks first
- ❑ Lift both legs into the car, avoid twisting your back



## 2.2 Lower Body Dressing

- ❑ Choose clothes that fit loosely. Skirts/Sarong can also be easier to put on than pants
- ❑ Gather your clothes and place them within easy reach
- ❑ Use a chair with a backrest and avoid slouching if you are seated for lower body dressing
- ❑ To avoid bending your back, lift your legs to thread your pants or slip on your shoes/socks



- ❑ Position commonly-used items and tools (e.g. cleaning tools / cooking utensils / condiments) at shoulder to waist level to avoid bending your back excessively to reach items
- ❑ While doing household chores (e.g. sweeping / mopping / vacuuming), ensure that cleaning tools are of adequate length so that you do not need to lean and bend forward too much
- ❑ While doing household chores (e.g. sweeping / mopping / vacuuming), use your legs to move back and forth as needed rather than use your back

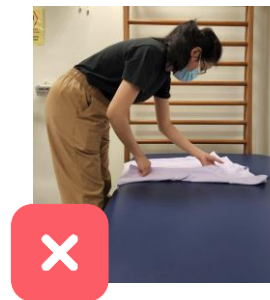
- ❑ Alternatively, use dressing aids to reach your feet. Examples of dressing aids include:
  - A long-handled shoehorn to assist with slipping your feet into the shoes
  - A sock aid to assist with slipping your feet into the socks
  - A long-handled reacher or clothing hook to assist with threading pants



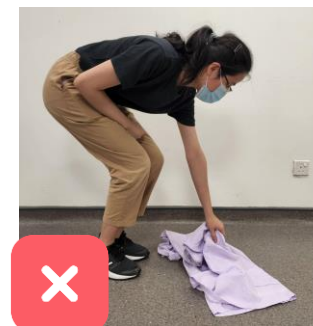
## 3.0 Household Chores

### General Tips

- ❑ Avoid poor posture (while standing or sitting), repetitive motions (e.g. getting up / sitting down too frequently), and any prolonged positions (e.g. staying in the same position for 30 mins or longer)
- ❑ For chores that can be done while sitting (e.g. folding laundry / ironing clothes / chopping and preparing ingredients) sit on a chair with a backrest with your feet flat on the ground and avoid slouching



- ❑ Avoid bending your back forward excessively to reach for items, use a long handled reacher and try to stand as close to the item as possible before retrieving it



## 2.3 Sleeping Positions

- ❑ When sleeping on your back, place a pillow under your knees to support the curvature of your lower back



- ❑ When sleeping on your side, rest your top knee on a pillow to reduce twisting of your back



## 2.4 Bed Mobility

### Getting up from bed using log roll method

- ❑ Bring your arms across your body and roll to one side, keeping your back straight at all times



- ❑ Bend your hips and knees to lower your legs over the bed edge



- ❑ Push with your hand and elbow to sit up at bed edge



### Getting back to bed using log roll method

- ❑ Sit over the edge of the bed
- ❑ Using one hand to support yourself gradually lower one side of your body onto the bed
- ❑ Lift both legs onto the bed
- ❑ Roll to lie flat on your back keeping your back straight at all times