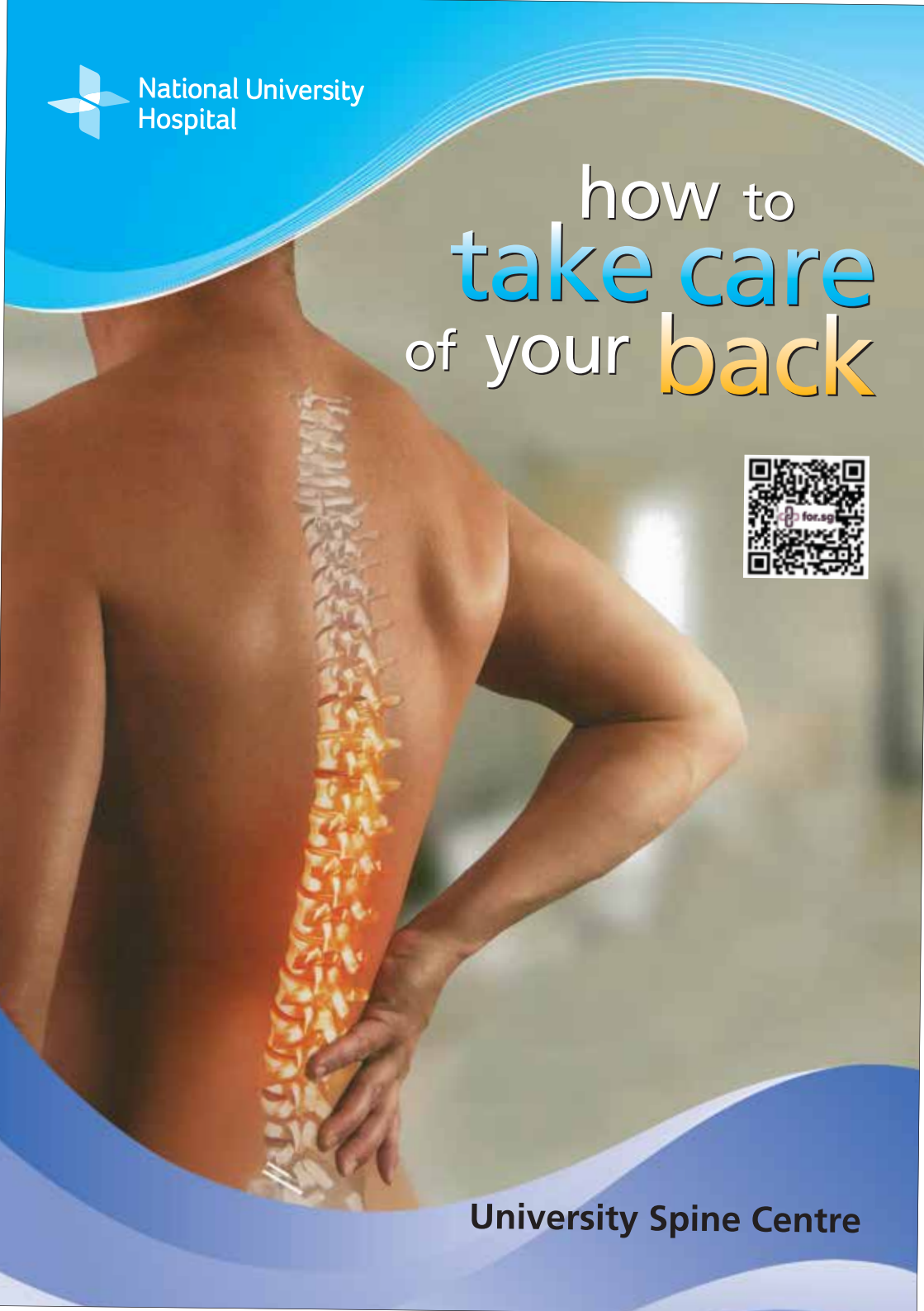
National University Hospital

how to take care of your back



University Spine Centre

how to take care of your back

Most of the back pain cases are not due to any serious diseases. Although some can last for a while, they may not be serious. Most people can get going quite quickly, even when they still experience some pain.

Your back is designed for movement. The earlier you get it moving and resume your daily activities, the sooner you will feel better. Resting for more than a day or two usually does not help as it may prolong the pain and even cause disability in some cases.

The people who cope best with back pain are those who stay active and get on with life despite the pain. The most important thing is to get moving as soon as possible.



rest or stay active?

Bed rest for more than two days is **not** recommended because the pain will be prolonged and may result in the following:

- Your back gets stiff
- Your muscles get weak
- Your bones get weak
- You lose physical fitness
- You get depressed
- The pain may worsen
- It will be more difficult to get going again

Regular physical activity is encouraged as it:

- Develops your muscles
- Keeps you flexible
- Gives you stronger bones
- Makes you fit
- Makes you feel good
- Releases natural chemicals that reduce the pain

Exercise helps your back by stretching tight muscles and joints. Find the exercise that works best for your back. Your goal is to get moving and steadily increase your level of activity.



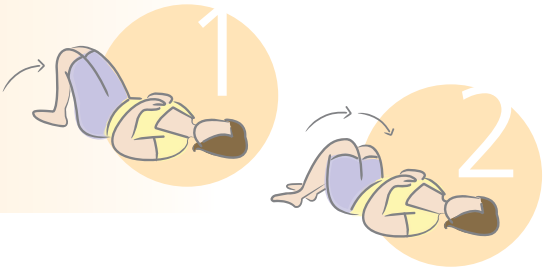
exercise

A healthy body weight is less strenuous on your spine. It is important to strengthen your back when you experience back pain. While you can continue with your normal sports activities, you may need to reduce the intensity. Swimming is good for your back – try varying your strokes.

simple exercises that you can do

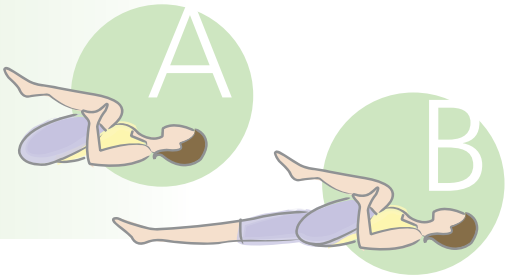
Knee rolling

Lie on a flat surface such as the floor. 1 Bend both knees and keep both feet on the surface, 2 gently roll knees side to side. Repeat 10 times.



Knee to chest stretch

Press back flat against bed. Bring either A both or B one knee to chest for 10 seconds then lower both or one knee back to the starting position slowly. Repeat 10 times.



Exercise Videos

Please scan QR code for more exercise videos on managing low back pain.

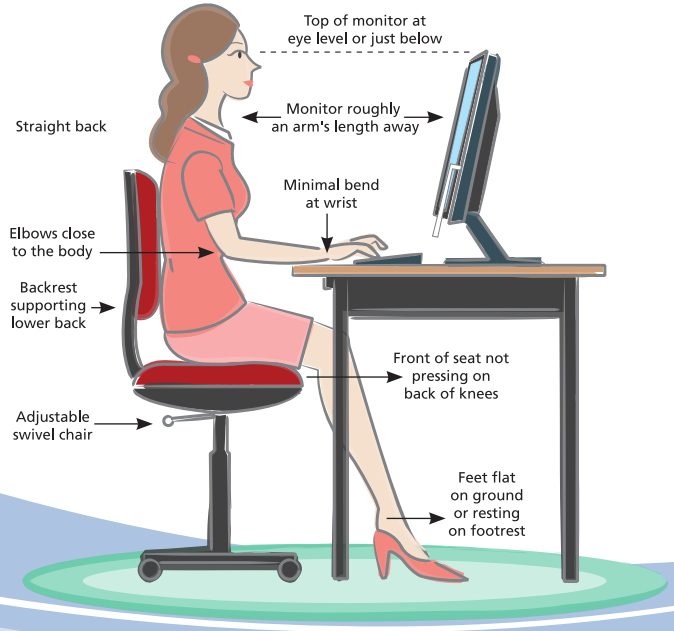
ergonomics (sitting task)

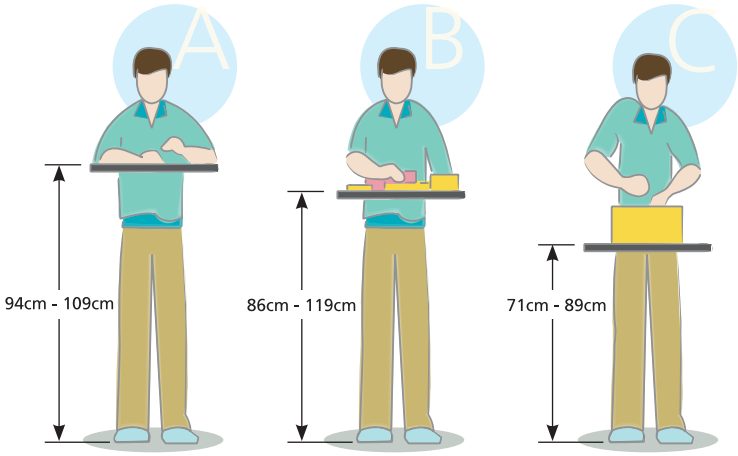
Workstation

- Place the monitor directly in front of you and behind the keyboard.
- Position the top of the monitor screen at or below eye level.
- Tilt or swivel the monitor screen to eliminate reflections on the screen.
- Use a desk lamp to illuminate documents properly.
- Use a document holder to place the printed document when you make reference to it as you type. This prevents you from having to look down or to the side constantly.
- Place the mouse and other input devices next to keyboard.
- Allow place for knees and feet to move freely under the work-station.

Chair

- Use the backrest of the chair to provide full support particularly for the lower back.
- Adjust the height of the chair to keep forearms, wrists and hands in a straight line when using the keyboard.
- Ensure the chair allows you to obtain a 90° or greater angle at the hips and knees.
- Use a footrest if needed to ensure feet are rested on the ground
- Don't stay seated for long – stand up and stretch regularly every 45 minutes (approximately).
- Apply the 20-20-20 rule to relieve tension in the spinal muscles. For every 20 minutes of computer usage, stretch or walk around for 20 seconds and look at something that is 20 feet (6 metres) away for 20 seconds.





Different tasks require different work surfaces
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (USA)

ergonomics (standing task)

Work station

- Working tables and benches should be adjustable. If the workstation cannot be adjusted, platforms to raise the shorter worker or pedestals on top of workstations for the taller worker should be considered.
- There should be enough room to move around and to change body position.
- Providing built-in foot rails or portable footrests allows the worker to shift body weight from one leg to the other.
- Elbow support for precision work helps reduce tension in the upper arms and neck.
- Controls and tools should be positioned such that the worker can reach them easily and without twisting and bending.
- Where it is possible, a seat should be provided so that the worker can do the job either sitting or standing. Seats at the workplace expand the variety of possible body positions and give the worker more flexibility.

Different tasks require different work surface heights:

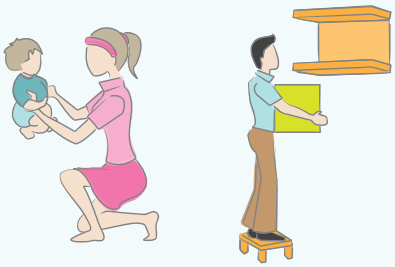
A Precision work, such as writing or electronic assembly, should be done on a work surface that is 5cm above elbow height. Elbow support should be provided for this kind of work.

B Light work, such as assembly-line or mechanical jobs should be done on a work surface that is about 5 to 10cm below elbow height.

C Heavy work which demands downward forces should be done on a work surface that is 20 to 40cm below elbow height.

DOs USE GOOD BODY MECHANICS

Lifting
- Bend your knees, not your back.
- Keep your spine as straight as possible.
- Hold objects close to your body.
- Lift objects to only chest height.
- Lift with the help of your leg muscles.
- Get help when lifting heavy loads.



Standing / Walking
- Stand with one foot propped up; change positions often.
- Stand upright with head up and back straight.
- Walk with good posture with chin tucked in, head held high and toes pointing forward.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.



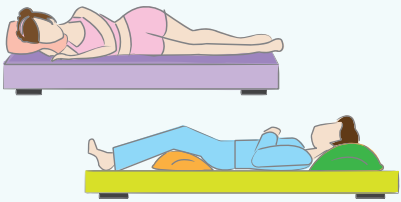
Driving
- Adjust your car seat so that knees are at or just below hip level.
- Sit upright and drive with both hands comfortably on the wheel.
- Ensure good support to your lower back; use a rolled-up towel or lumbar support.



Sitting
- Sit with both feet flat on the floor.
- Keep knees at or slightly below hip level.
- Sit upright against the backrest.
- Support your lower back with a rolled-up towel or lumbar support.
- Change your sitting posture regularly.



Sleeping
- Sleep on a bed with a firm base or mattress.
- When sleeping on your side, place a pillow between your bent knees.
- Place a pillow under your knees when you sleep on your back.



AVOID BACK STRAINS DON'Ts



Lifting

- Don't bend forward.
- Don't twist your body while lifting heavy objects.
- Don't lift objects above shoulder level.
- Don't carry loads at arm's length.

These movements may cause injury.



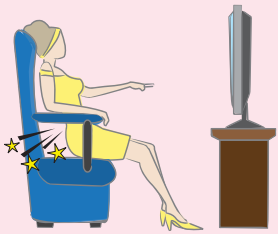
Standing / Walking

- Don't stand in one position for too long.
- Don't bend forward while your legs are straight.
- Don't slouch when standing or walking.
- Don't wear high heels for walking or standing for long periods.



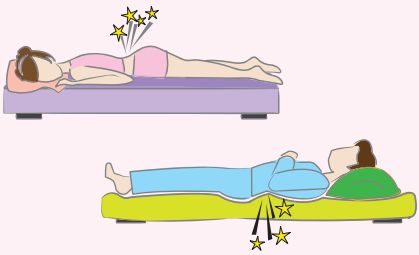
Driving

- Don't sit too far back from the steering wheel. Constant stretching of your leg to press the pedals and your arm to hold steering wheel can cause a strain on your back.
- Don't drive with your knees higher than the level of your hips.



Sitting

- Don't slump.
- Don't sit in a chair that's too high or too far from your desk.
- Avoid leaning forward.
- Avoid arching or rounding your back.
- Avoid sitting in one position for too long.



Sleeping

- Don't sleep or lounge on soft mattresses or cushions without support.

locate us



- Medical Centre
- Kent Ridge Wing
- Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Centre
- Main Building
- NUHS Tower Block
- Emergency / Children's Emergency
- Visitor Registration

Locations of National Centres

- National University Cancer Institute Singapore
- National University Heart Centre Singapore
- National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore

Ward Locations

- Wards 5A - 9B Register at VR Level 3
- Wards 20 - 64 Register at VR Level 1

Scan QR code for full list of facilities at NUH

contact us

University Spine Centre
Kent Ridge Wing, Zone C, Level 3, C03-03

Clinic B (Orthopaedic Surgery)
Main Building, Zone F Level 1, F01-24

Appointment & Enquiry: (65) 6908 2222

Clinic Hours
Mondays to Fridays: 8.30am – 5.30pm
Saturdays / Sundays / Public Holidays: Closed

Enquiry email: spine_enquiries@nuhs.edu.sg

Website: www.nuh.com.sg

Scoliosis Specialist Clinic
Health Promotion Board
3, Second Hospital Avenue,
#04-06, Singapore 168937

Clinic Hours
Mondays to Fridays: 8.30am – 5.30pm
Saturdays / Sundays / Public Holidays: Closed

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