Smith *Upper Cervical Chiropractic Health Care*
16052 Beach Blvd., Suite 130, Huntington Beach, CA 92647 ● (714) 848-8122 ● www.RogerSmithDC.com

11 Steps to a Pain Free Back

The first step and most important step is keeping your schedule of appointments with Dr. Smith. This is essential to lay a sturdy foundation for the continued care to build upon. It has more than likely been years that your spine has been out of alignment and this has altered your body's ability to adapt as it would have without the subluxation. Now we will work together to rebuild your ability to heal, repair and strengthen your spine so reoccurrences are kept to a minimum if any.

Low back pain has many different causes, including the normal wear and tear that comes with aging. While you can't turn back the hands of time or prevent every type of painful back disorder, in most cases there are things you can do to help keep your back healthy.

Stay fit

Staying active and in good physical condition is probably the most important thing you can do to maintain a healthy back. This strategy becomes even more important if you want to protect yourself from a relapse following an initial episode of acute back pain. Experts believe that regular exercise helps prevent back pain by strengthening your back and abdominal muscles.
Bicycling (either stationary or regular), swimming, and walking lead the list of low-risk, high-benefit activities for most people's backs. All are low- or minimal-impact exercises that strengthen the erector spinae and abdominal muscles and stimulate secretion of endorphins (hormones that act as the body's own painkillers). None involve awkward or stressful actions that are detrimental to back muscles — for example, requiring them to exert a lot of force. Since they put little burden on your back, these exercises also offer activity's other benefits without placing your back at undue risk.

Maintain a healthy weight

Although carrying too much weight per se has not been proven to be a primary cause of back pain disorders, being overweight or obese can slow your recovery. Those extra pounds also increase the risk that back pain will return.
The heavier you are, the greater the load your spine must carry. To make matters worse, if the bulk of your weight comes in the form of abdominal fat, rather than muscle, your center of gravity can shift forward — a condition that puts added pressure on your back. By maintaining a healthy weight, you can ease the burden on your spine.

Kick the habit

In addition to contributing to a host of other health hazards, research has shown a link between smoking and back pain. Scientists believe that the nicotine in cigarettes contributes to low back pain in two ways. First, nicotine hampers the flow of blood to the vertebrae and disks. This impairs their function and may trigger a bout of back pain. Second, smokers tend to lose bone faster than nonsmokers, putting them at greater risk for osteoporosis, another common cause of back pain.

Lighten your load

An overstuffed backpack can signal more than a healthy workout at the gym: It can be a harbinger of back pain. If you use a backpack, you can take steps to protect yourself. For starters, use both the pack's straps instead of slinging one strap over a shoulder, try to carry only the essentials, and lighten your load whenever possible. Opt for backpacks that have different-sized compartments to help distribute weight more evenly. And look for wide, padded straps, as well as a padded back

When carrying a heavy load, put the heaviest items as close as possible to the center of the back, and use the hip strap for support. For very heavy loads use a backpack with wheels. Above all, remember to bend from your knees when picking up your pack.

Develop back-saving habits

You can take some of the pressure off your back by following these simple tips:

1. Keep your spine healthy with regular Upper Cervical check-up's.
2. While standing to perform ordinary tasks like ironing or folding laundry, keep one foot on a small stepstool.
3. Don't remain sitting or standing in the same position for too long. Stretch, shift your position, or take a short walk when you can.
4. When bending from the waist, always use your hands to support yourself.
5. When sitting, keep your knees a bit higher than your hips and bend them at a 90-degree angle. Sit with your feet comfortably on the floor. If your feet don't reach the floor, put a book or a small stool under them.
6. Because vacuuming can take a toll on your back, tackle rooms in chunks, spending no more than 5–10 minutes at a time doing this task.
7. Choose an office chair that offers good back support (preferably with an adjustable backrest, lumbar support, armrests, and wheels) and set up your workspace so you don't have to do a lot of twisting.
8. Try not to overload briefcases or backpacks (see "Lighten your load").
9. Make frequent stops when driving long distances.
10. While driving, sit back in your seat, and if your seat does not provide sufficient support, place a rolled blanket or some towels behind your lower back. Try to shift your weight occasionally. If you have cruise control, use it when you can. Also consider using a foam seat cushion to absorb some of the vibration.
11. Sleep on your side if you can, and curl your body up a bit. Also, choose a pillow that keeps your head level with your spine; your pillow shouldn't prop your head up too high or let it droop. Choose a mattress that's firm enough to support your spine (so that it doesn't sag into the bed) and that follows your body's contours.