

Spine Sparing Postures

A lumbar disc is very sensitive to increases in pressure that occur with bending or twisting postures. It is crucial therefore to try to eliminate any isolated bending through the spine if you have any disc related problems. Simple daily tasks that we all take for granted if done incorrectly, will continue to aggravate the injured disc and sabotage the recovery process.

Here are some examples of frequently implicated daily tasks and pictures to illustrate the correct way of performing them

Sitting Up From A Chair:

Many people get up from a chair by throwing their body weight forward and bending through the low back. This will aggravate a lumbar disc.

To properly get up, first position the feet shoulder width apart, dig your toes into the ground and stiffen up the legs and buttocks. Next, imagine a having coin between the buttocks that you dont want to drop. Squeeze the coin and slowly stand straight. Be sure that your shoulders do not lean forward as you come up. Practice this until it becomes second nature.

Correct Way of Going From Sit to Stand



Incorrect Sitting Up From a Chair Posture



Spine Sparing Postures (continued)

Sitting Down:

Same is true for sitting down onto a chair. The shoulders and chest should not be allowed to go over the knees. This will create an isolated bending through the lumbar spine thus increasing the pressure of an irritated lumbar disc. The lowering into the seat motion should be done in a form of a squat with shoulders and chest high. Grip the ground with toes, tighten the buttocks as if holding in a coin and start sitting down by reaching for the seat with your buttocks. The bending should occur at the groin, not at the back.

Notice how the back stays straight through out the sitting down motion



Picking Up and Lowering an Object

Mistakes that are commonly made when one picks up or puts down an object revolve primarily around using the lower back excessively for the task. To avoid placing the back at risk of injury the object needs to be as close to the body as possible. It should then be either picked up or lowered using a squatting motion discussed above. Once the object is picked up it should then be moved by moving through the legs and hips. Spine should not be twisted. (See fourth photo)



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Spine Sparing Postures (continued)

Getting Out of Bed/Getting Into Bed.

A simple act of getting in or out of bed can involve excessive twisting and bending of the lumbar spine and causing an aggravation of an injured disc.

Here a stepwise movement sequence can help avoid unnecessary spinal loads:

When getting out of bed from a supine position bend the knees and dig the feet into the mattress. This will allow you to use your legs to help you turn and not your spine. Let one leg fall out to the side you are turning to. (second photo) The inside leg should then start to move at the same time as the shoulder on that side, essentially rolling the body from supine to side-lying position as one unit. (third photo). This sequence is also used for rolling side to side while in bed. Once on the side the legs should be lowered off the edge of the bed. The weight of the legs will make it easier to raise the torso into an upright position. Once the legs are down, use both arms to push your self up into a seated position.

Getting back into bed is done by reversing the above sequence



Tying Shoes/Putting on Socks

An activity that can create very high pressures in the lumbar disc if done with a bent spine in either sitting or standing position.

To avoid this you can start by bringing the foot up to a chair and sliding your hips forward until your hands can reach the sock or the shoe. Make sure that the back stays straight as your slide your hips forward. Alternatively you can place one knee on the ground with the other knee and foot in front. Again, slide the hips forward, keeping the spine straight, until your hands can reach your forward foot. (see next page for photos)

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Spine Sparing Postures (continued)



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